# THE Atlantic

JULY/AUGUST 2006

## INSIDE THE JIHAD

THE MAKING OF AMERICA'S DEADLIEST ENEMY IN IRAQ ...

BY MARY ANNE WEAVER

... AND THE HACKER WHO SPREAD TERROR OVER THE WEB

BY NADYA LABI

**PLUS:**

THE MONSTER OF FLORENCE

A CRIME NOVELIST STALKS A REAL-LIFE SERIAL KILLER

BY DOUGLAS PRESTON

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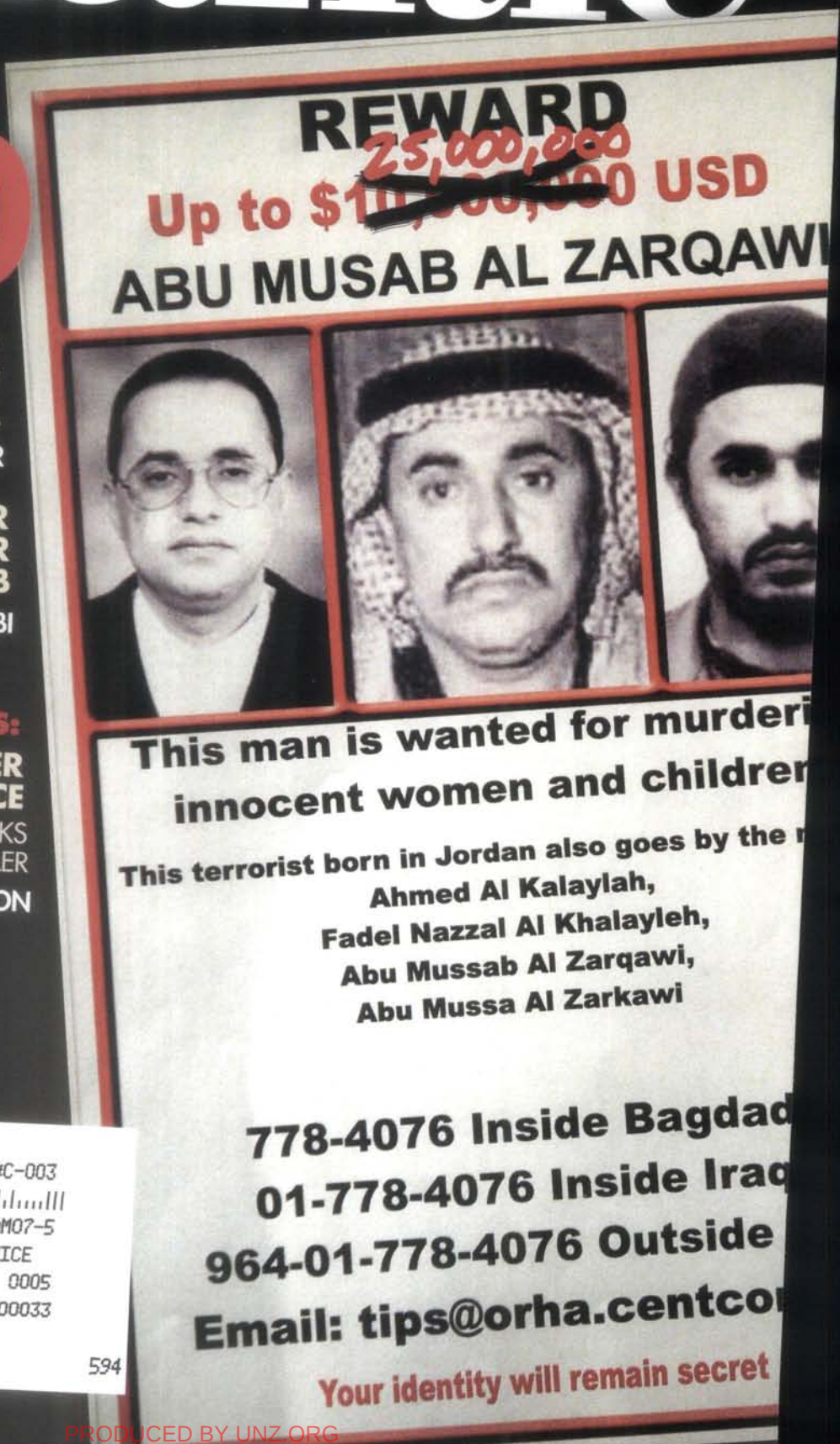


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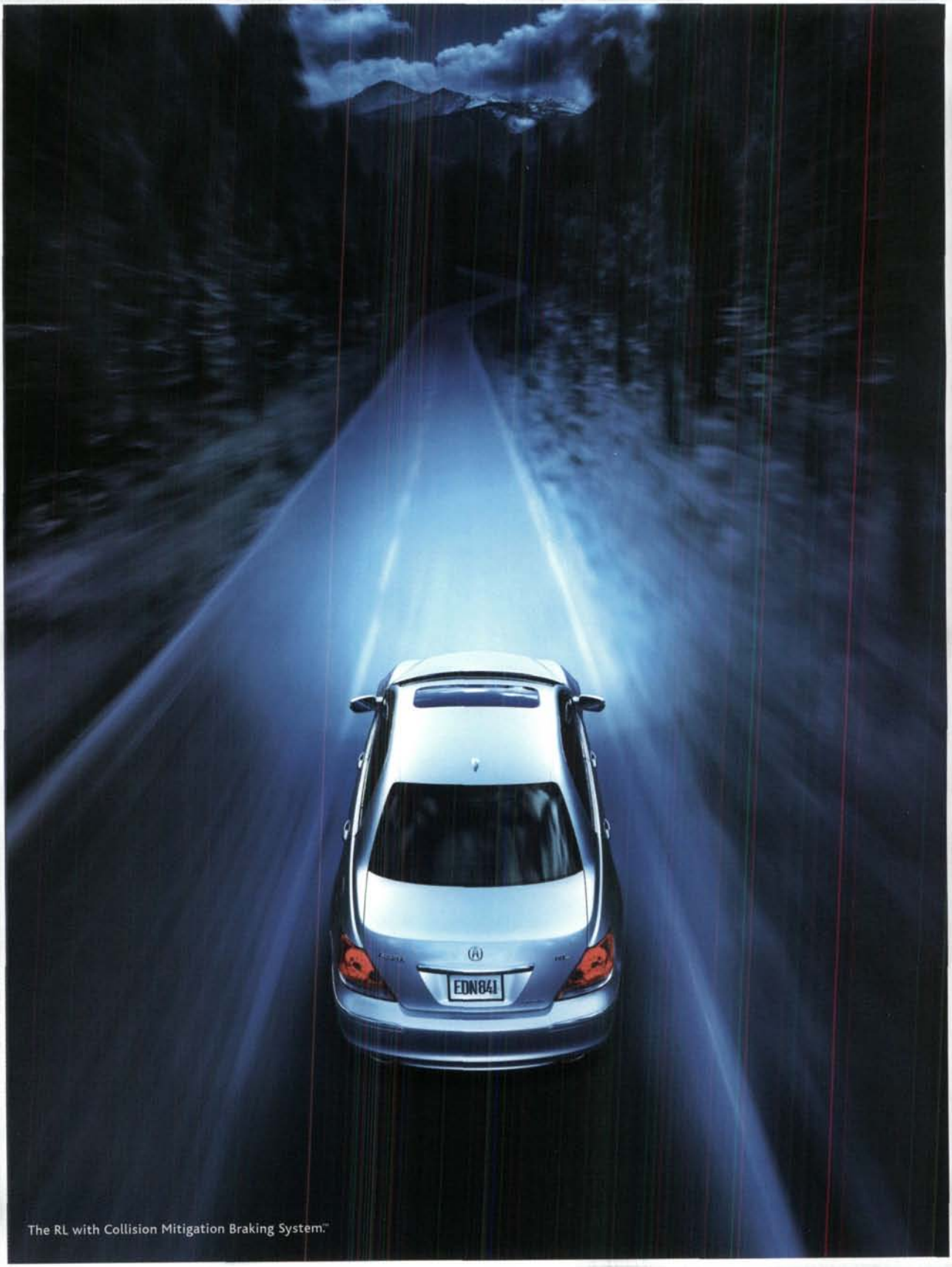


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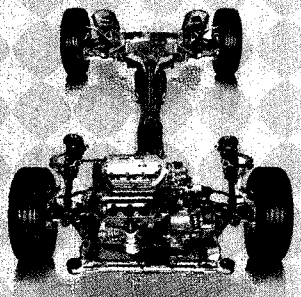

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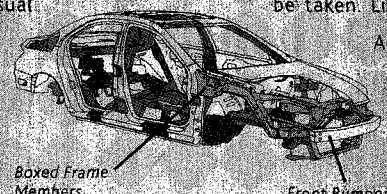


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# STARTING YOUNG

## IT'S NOW CONSIDERED THE BEST WAY TO FIGHT OUR GROWING OBESITY PROBLEM

Hit the rewind button. Thirty years ago, American society hadn't yet traded the playground for the computer screen, adopted a diet chock full of fast food or learned to say "Supersize Me."

Recognizing what's changed since those slimmer days is an important step in reshaping the future. Faced with a generation of Americans whose weighty problems are starting to strain the medical system, health care experts are launching a society-wide effort to bring back such things as longer recess, safer playgrounds, walkable sidewalks and healthier school lunches. The primary focus of their efforts: It's kids.

Why kids? For one thing, they are more adaptable. Establish good nutrition and exercise habits when they're young, and chances are good that those healthy behaviors will stick. "There is no question that obesity is very difficult to treat once it develops," says Dr. Stephen R. Daniels, professor of pediatrics and environment health at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. "Starting earlier gives us a better shot."

Research shows, for example, that kids who participate in some kind of obesity programming can do very well. "In fact, they do much better than their adult counterparts," says pediatrician Lorna Friedman, senior medical executive at CIGNA Healthcare. That's the good news, she says.

The bad news: Some 15% of children are currently considered obese. That compares to the early 70s when obesity rates were closer to 5%. In some populations, the current numbers are even higher. In New Jersey, a full 20% of sixth graders are obese, and another 19% are overweight.

Translate those statistics into health problems, doctors say, and the trend is even scarier. "We are starting to see health outcomes in children that had previously only been seen in adults," says Dr. Jeffrey P. Koplan, vice president for academic health affairs at Emory University and chairman of the committee that authored the Institute of Medicine's 2004 report, "Preventing Childhood Obesity." Type II diabetes, once virtually unknown in children, is a prime example, he says. "What previously could be tossed off as aesthetic, now is being seen for what it really is—a serious risk factor for disease." There are other costs as well. Obese children are more likely to suffer from low self-esteem and depression. And as they grow up, there's a 70% chance that they will stay obese. Indeed, the rise of obesity, unhealthy eating habits and physical inactivity has prompted the U.S. Surgeon General to warn that we may see the first generation with a "shorter lifespan than their parents."

> *"Establish good nutrition and exercise habits when they're young, and chances are good that those healthy behaviors will stick."*

A recent Rand Corporation study found that obese people spend 36% more on health care services and 77% more on medications. Other studies set the national health care cost of obesity and overweight conditions in adults at between $98 billion and $129 billion a year. "That's nowhere near the full impact of the obesity epidemic," says Dr. Koplan. Even if obesity rates level off, costs will continue to rise as today's obese children become adults.

Finger-pointing is counterproductive. "It's not one group's fault or responsibility," says Vickie James, R.D., L.D., of Healthy Kids Challenge, a nonprofit organization that's taking its emphasis on fitness and nutrition to the schools. "It is everyone taking simple, small steps together." These simple steps, however, add up to a major overhaul of some deeply entrenched aspects of American life and business. The new Institute of Medicine report has thrown down the gauntlet, calling for major change in everything from what's put in the school vending machines to what's put on the television screen. Likened by some to the first surgeon general's report on tobacco, the report makes far-reaching recommendations on issues as diverse as local zoning ordinances, health plan incentives, media advertising and the family television.

By focusing on kids, these experts also hope to create a ripple effect. "There are very few people in this country who aren't connected to a child," explains Ms. James. By mobilizing society to focus on kids, she says, the message gets delivered to everyone.

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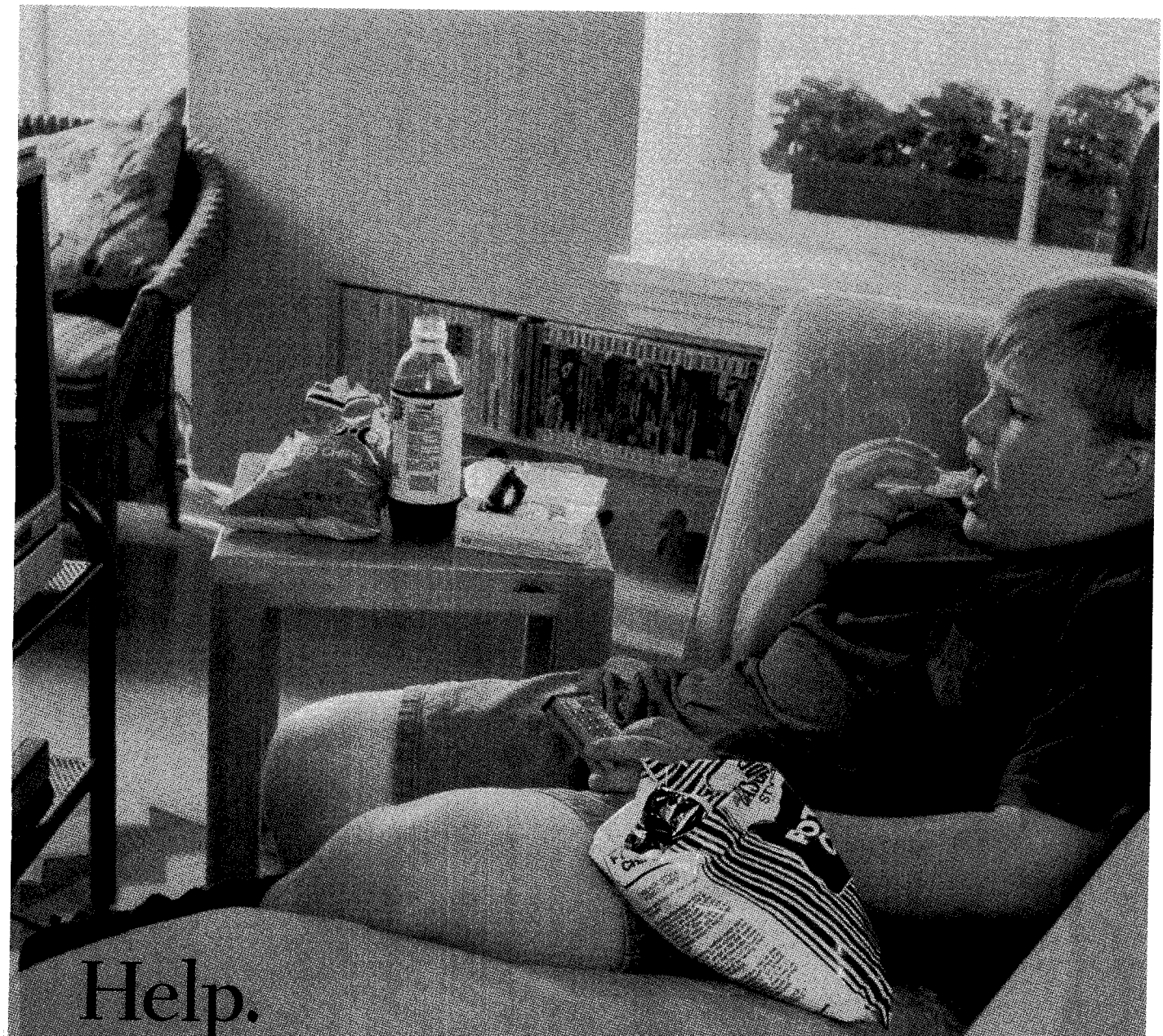

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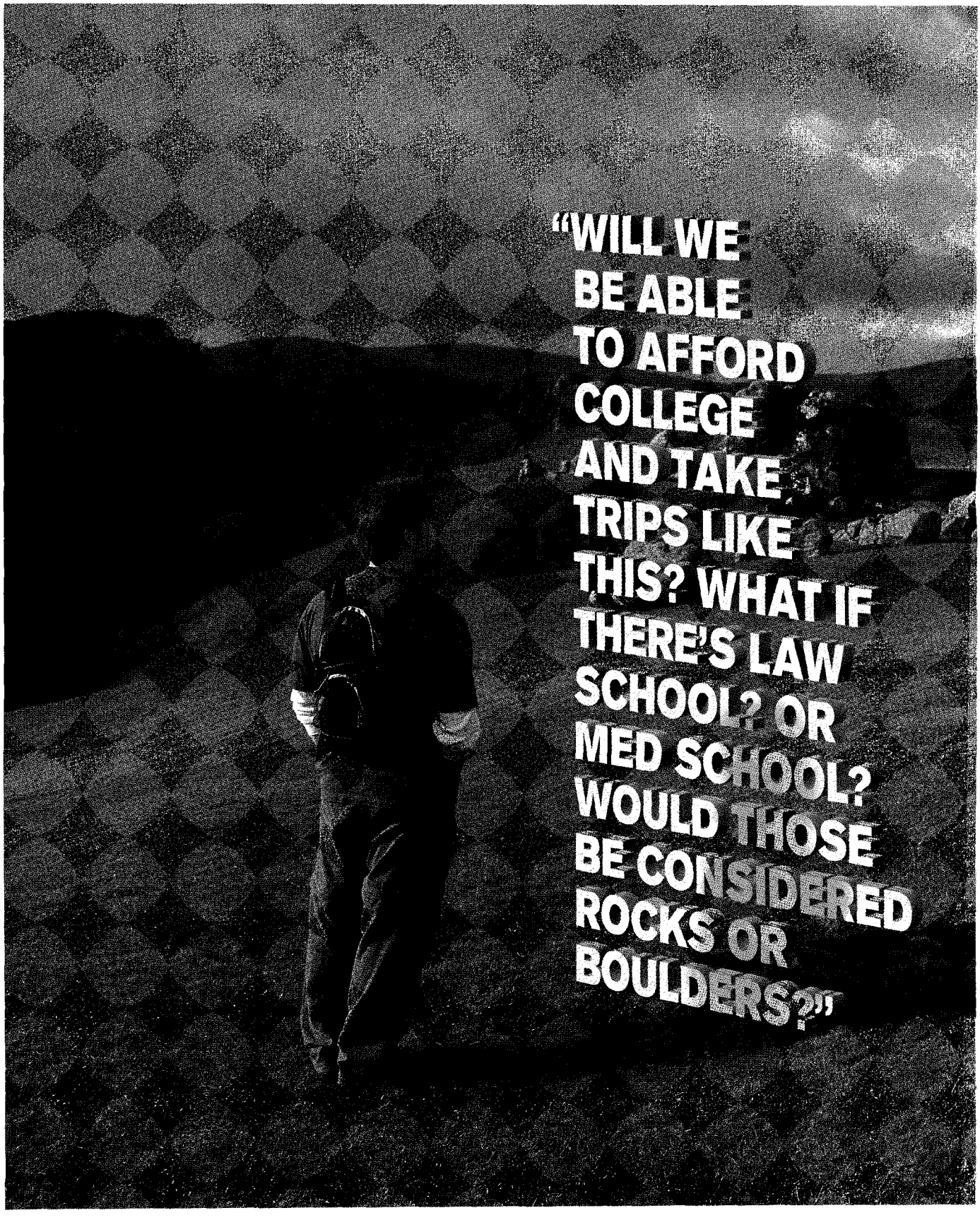


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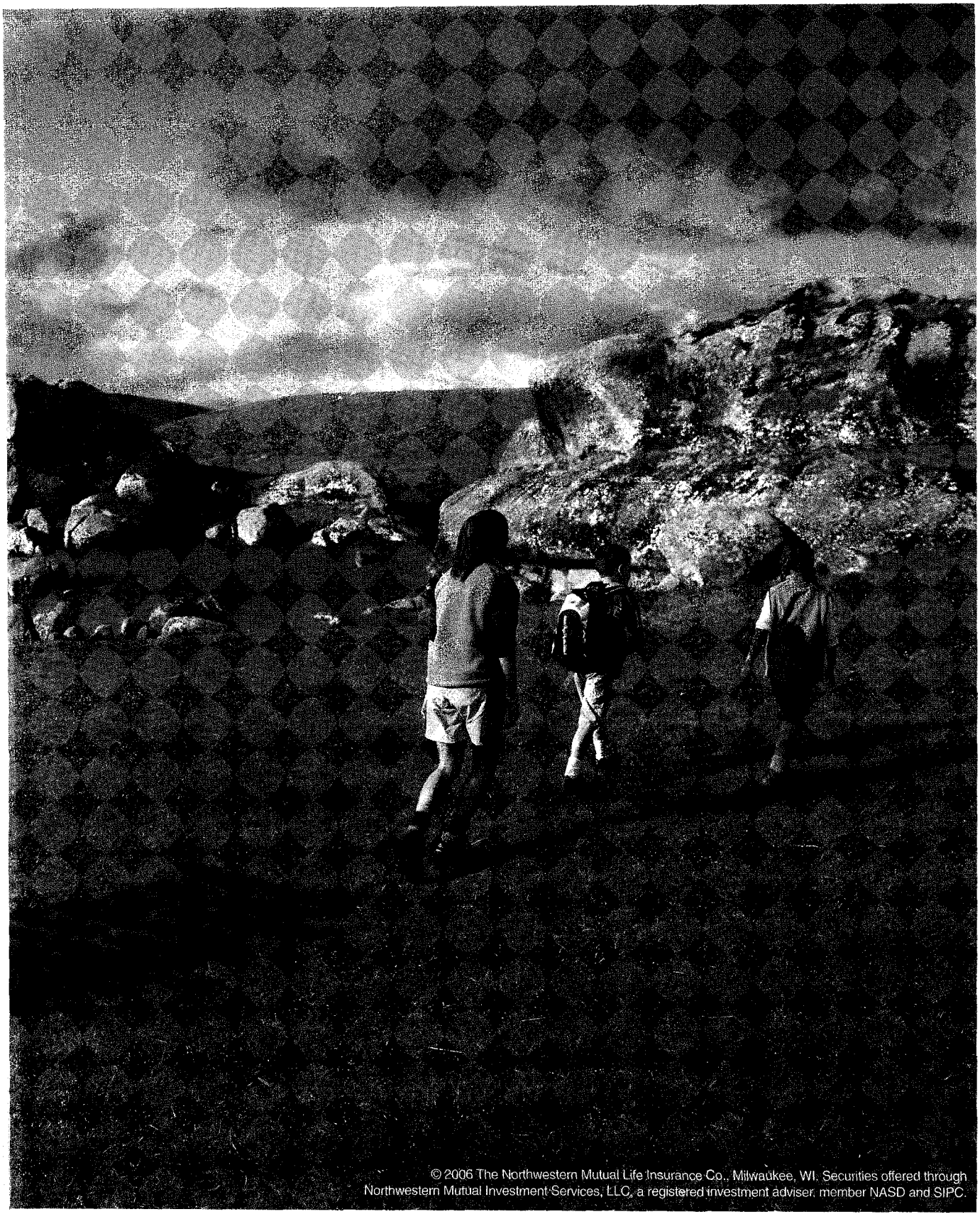


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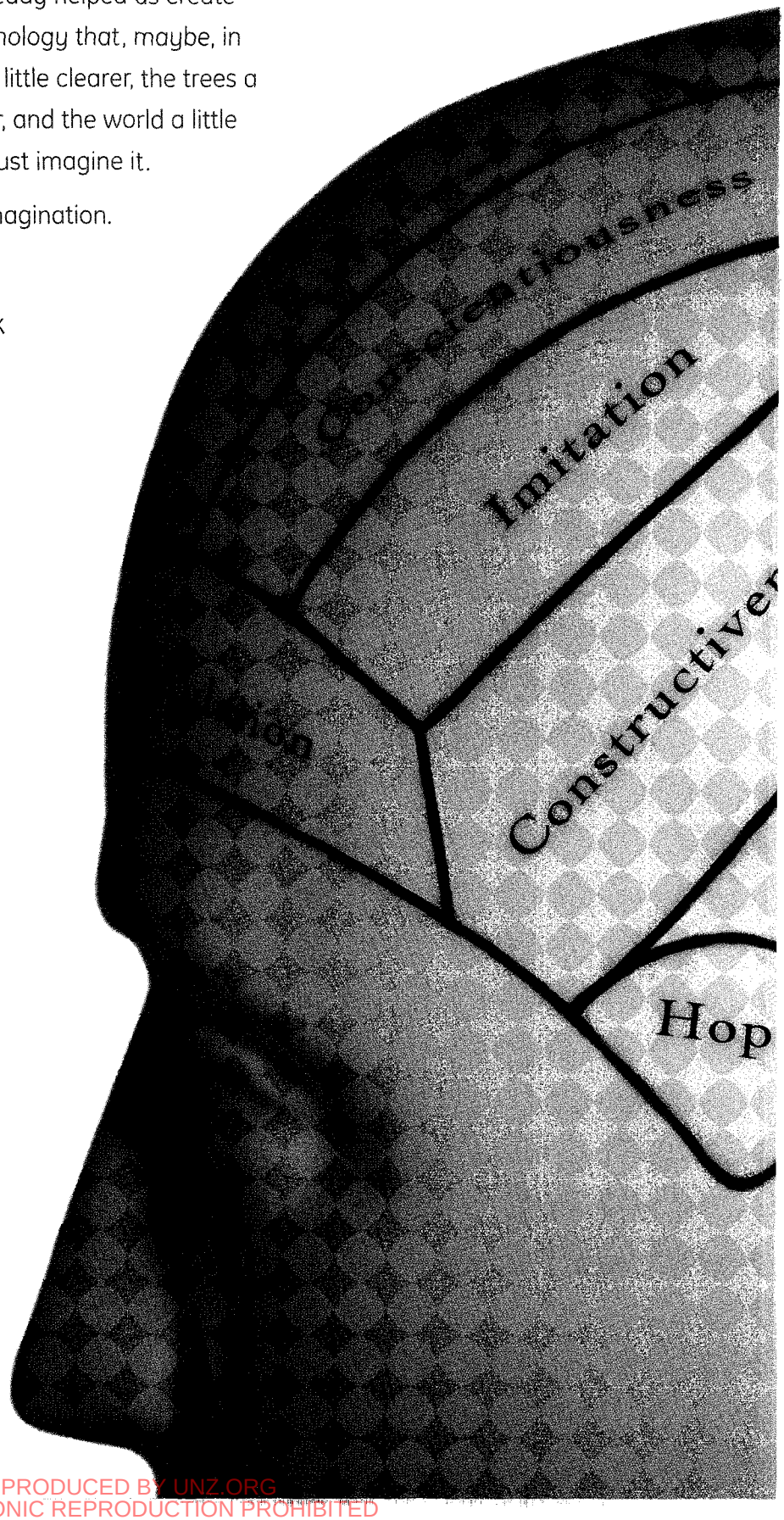


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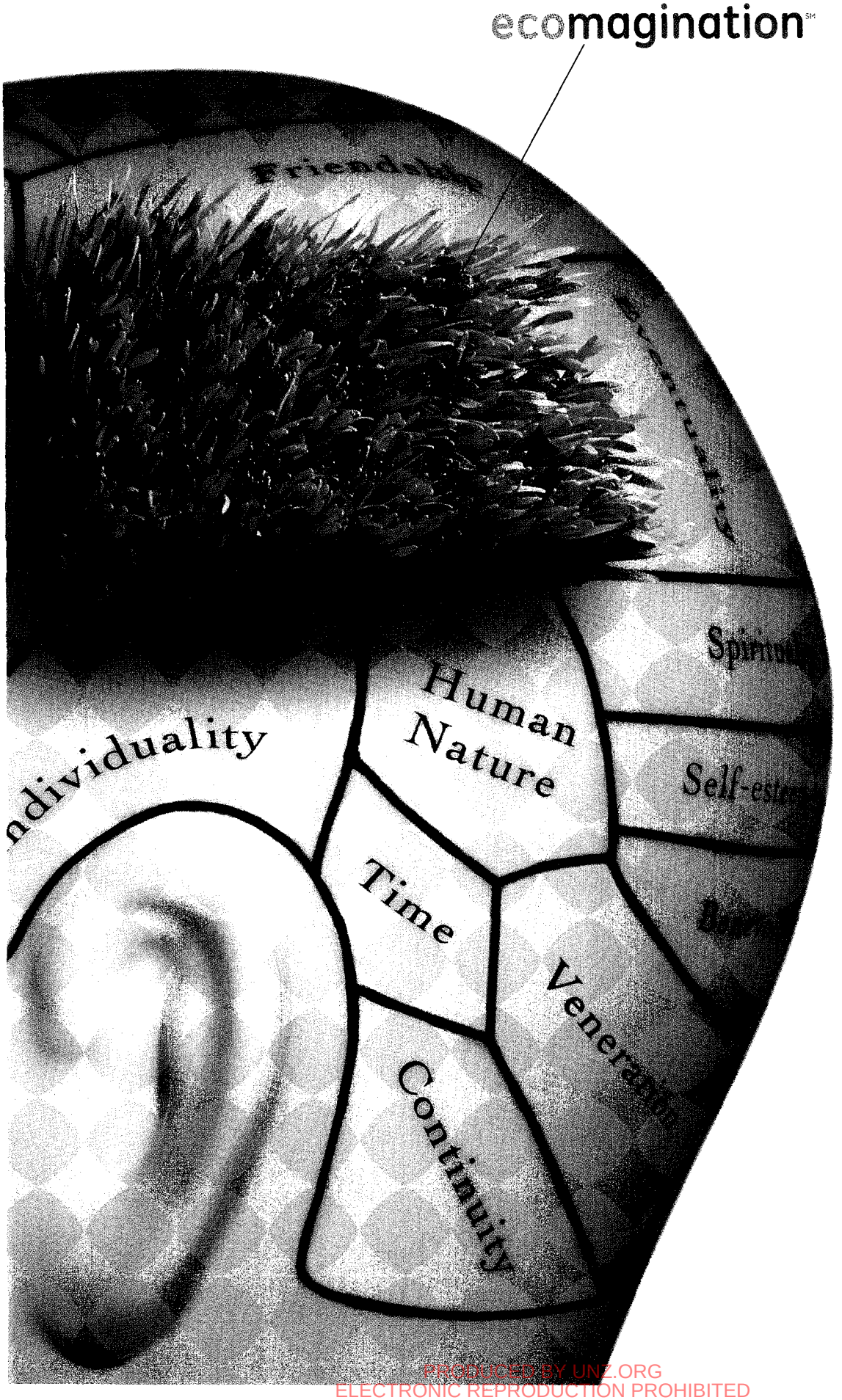


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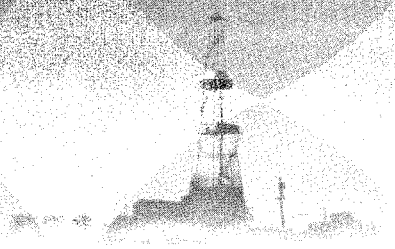

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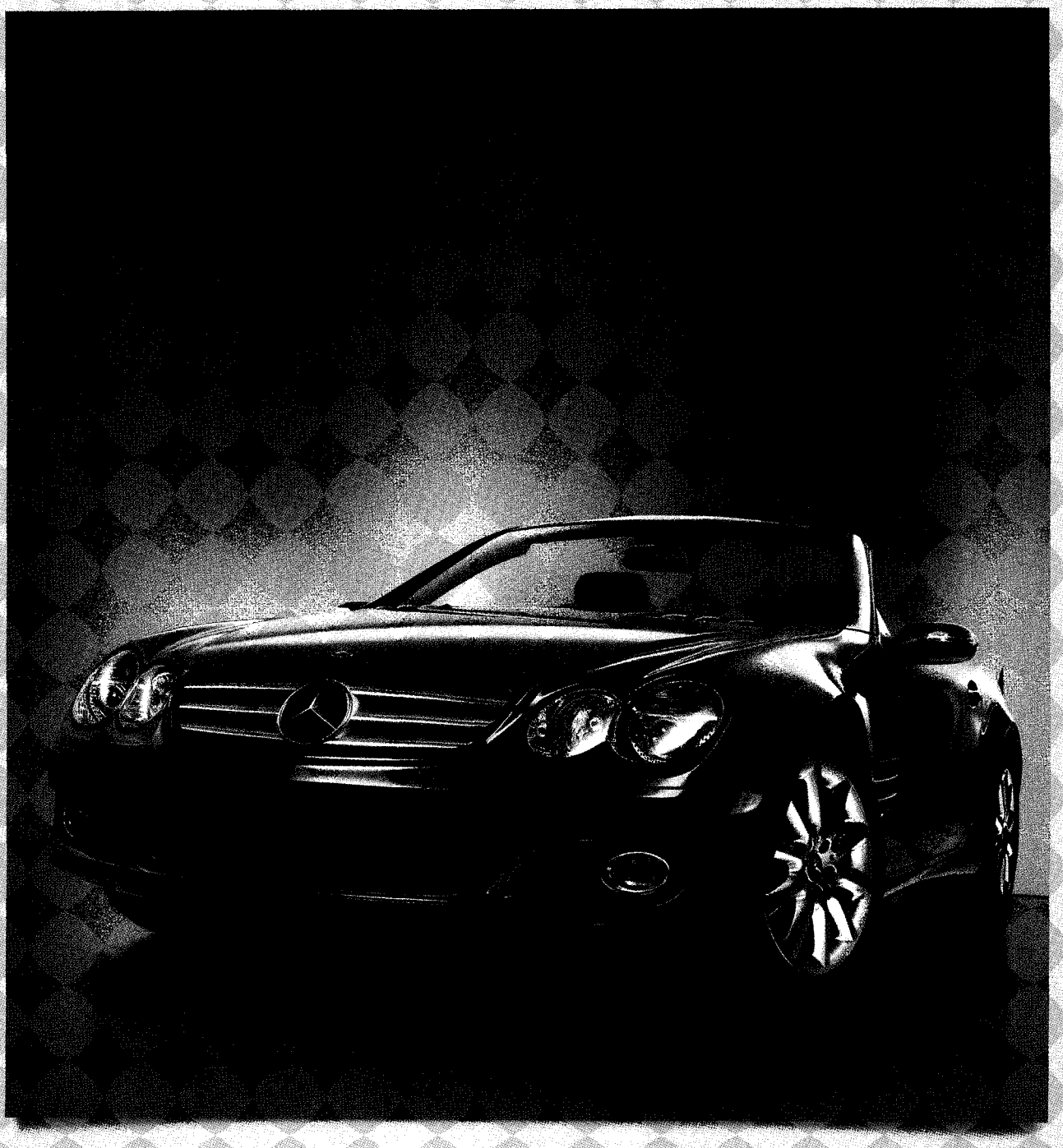

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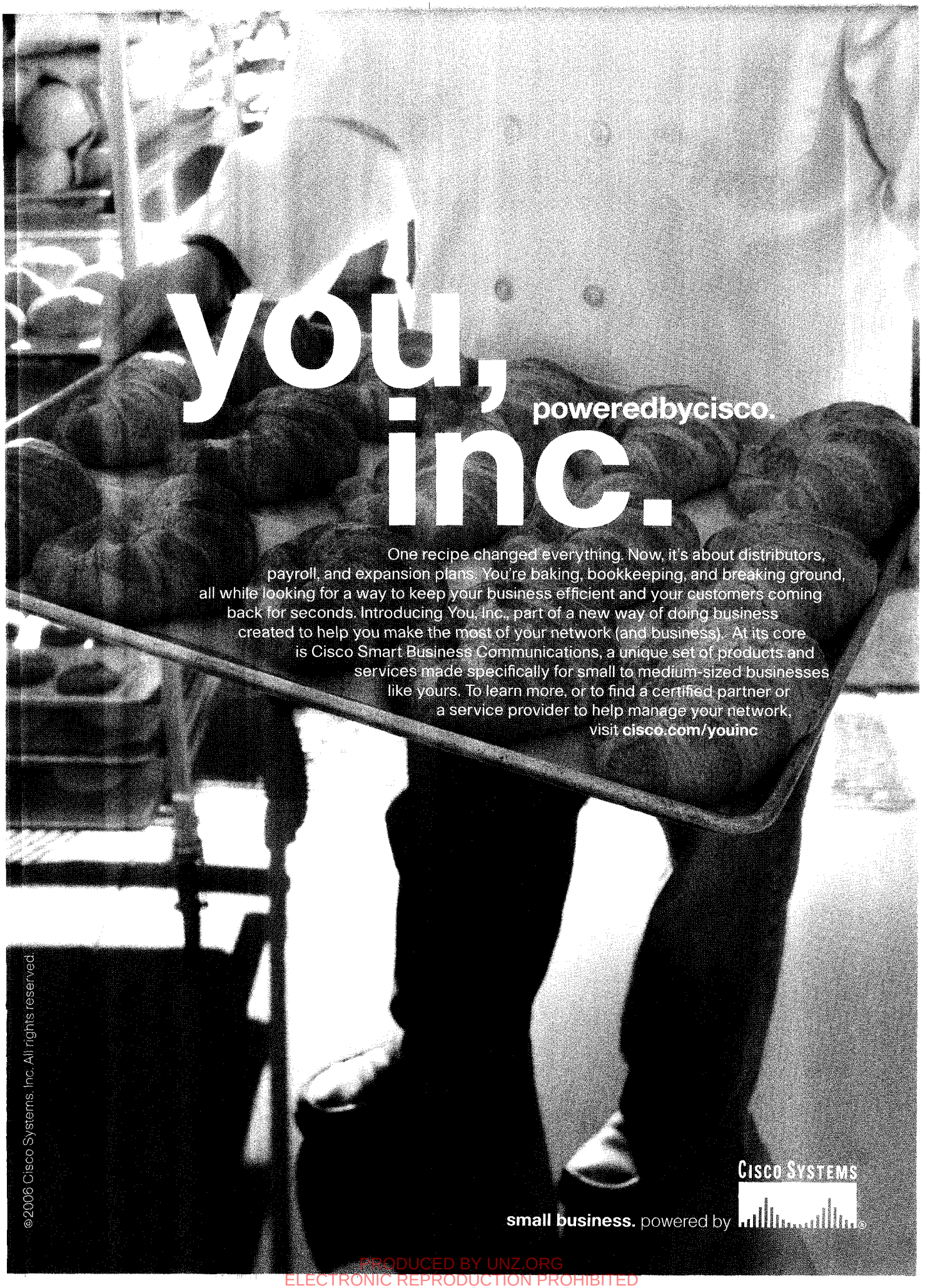


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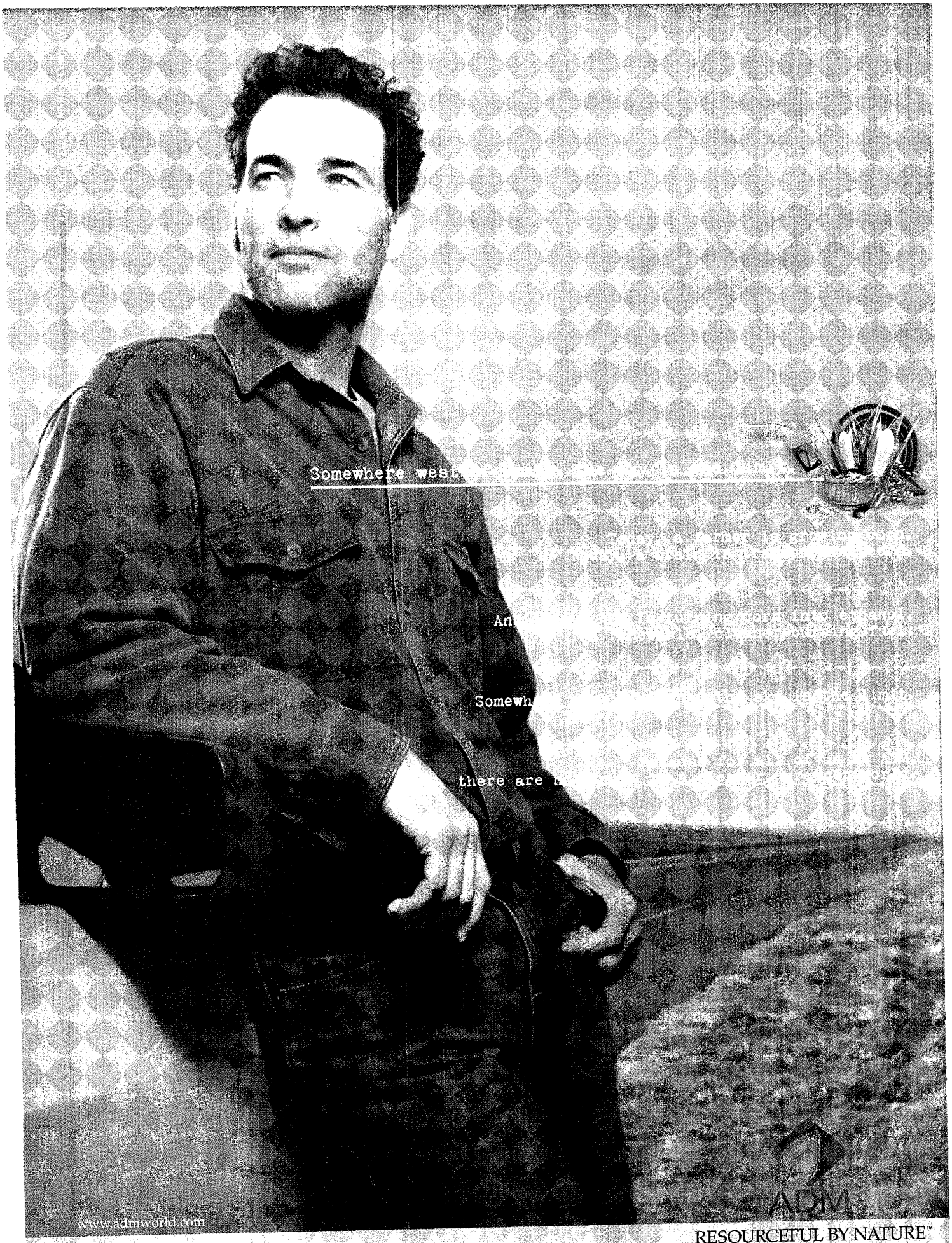


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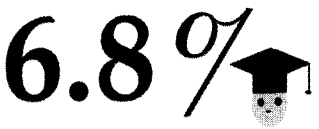
# CALENDAR

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE WEEKS AHEAD




JULY 1

### Student-Loan Sting

To shrink the budget deficit, Congress cut $12 billion from federal student-loan programs and instituted a new loan formula that will cause interest rates to jump 1.5 to 2 percentage points from their recent historic lows. Financial-aid experts are urging parents to consider loan consolidation as a way to lock in low variable rates before today's hike goes into effect. After today, the interest rate on Stafford loans will jump from as low as 4.7 percent to a 6.8 percent fixed rate, and on the Parents Loan for Undergraduate Students the rate will go from 6.1 percent to an 8.5 percent fixed rate. Under the new system, a student with a $20,000 Stafford loan will pay about $4,800 more over the life of the loan.

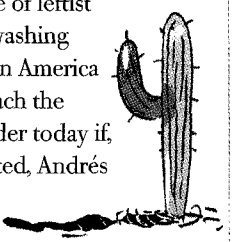
JULY 1

### Abortion Outlawed

A new South Dakota law, signed in March, is set to take effect today and will ban all abortions except those to save the life of the mother, without exception for rape or incest. The statute intentionally defies the Supreme Court's interpretations of *Roe v. Wade*. Its backers hope the inevitable legal challenge will ultimately lead the Court, recently altered by the arrival of two conservative Bush appointees, to overturn the landmark 1973 decision. Opponents could still reverse the law if they gather enough signatures to put a referendum before voters in November.

JULY 2

### Mexico's Left Turn



The wave of leftist politics washing over Latin America could reach the U.S. border today if, as expected, Andrés Manuel López Obrador wins Mexico's presidential election. The center-right party currently in power has sought to portray López Obrador as a nutty populist in the mold of Venezuela's Hugo Chávez. López Obrador does play up the folksy charm—he drives a cheap little Nissan Tsuru, rails against free trade, and claims the current president, Vicente Fox, is a U.S. puppet—but he limits his attacks on the United States and President Bush, and he has tried to reassure foreign investors with promises of fiscal moderation.

JULY 5

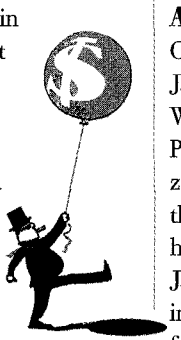
### Gotti Goes for Three

John A. Gotti—"Junior" to mob aficionados—is doing an impressive job of living up to the nickname of his infamous father, the "Teflon Don." The younger Gotti's third trial for racketeering, extortion, loan sharking, and kidnapping starts today; the first two ended in hung juries. The proceedings have brought out the full carnival of outer-borough mob life: turncoats' testimonies; the outspoken Gotti women (including Junior's sister, the reality-television star Victoria Gotti); and even allegations that the senior Gotti, who died behind bars in 2002, sired a couple of secret families. In the meantime, Gang Land News claims that John "Jackie Nose" D'Amico has taken over as acting head of the Gambinos.

JULY 15–17

### Stare-Down in Saint Petersburg

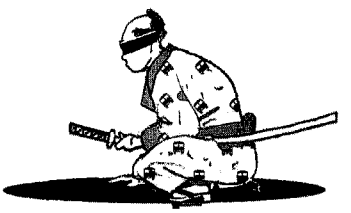
Russia hosts this year's Group of Eight annual summit in Saint Petersburg, another milepost since the fall of communism. Cracks in the U.S.-Russian relationship will likely be on display. Vladimir Putin has nationalized the energy industry and used it to bully neighbors; cracked down on the press and opposition groups; and tangled with the United States over issues of democratization in the former Soviet Union, basing rights in Central Asia, and Iran's nuclear program. President Bush has ignored calls to boycott the meeting, but may send a message to Putin, as he has done before, by paying visits to Russia's democratic neighbors.



AUGUST 1

### Get Your Passports

The State Department recommends that American travelers interested in going to the Caribbean, Bermuda, Canada, or Mexico next year start queuing up now for passports (August marks the end of the busy season for passport processing). Beginning on December 31, the United States, which now requires only a driver's license for entry from these places, will require the blue booklets. The new requirements are part of the 2004 antiterrorism bill, and will apply only to air and sea travel—for now. The real headache starts at the end of next year, when the Department of Homeland Security will demand passports at every border crossing between the United States and Canada and Mexico.



AUGUST 15

### Asian Firestorm

On today's anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, all eyes will be on Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. His repeated visits to the Yasukuni Shrine—which honors nearly 2.5 million Japanese killed in wars dating back to 1853, including fourteen of the most notorious Japanese war criminals from World War II—have infuriated neighboring countries and crystallized growing xenophobia and nationalism throughout the region. Associated by many with the resurgence of Japanese militarism, the shrine's museum suggests that Japan was not responsible for World War II. Last year, on the sixtieth anniversary, Koizumi stayed away from Yasukuni, and he acknowledged Japan's guilt and apologized for its actions in the war. But his visits remain a sore spot, and China and South Korea, both victims of Japanese aggression, have refused to hold summits with Koizumi until he stops.

*—Matthew Quirk*



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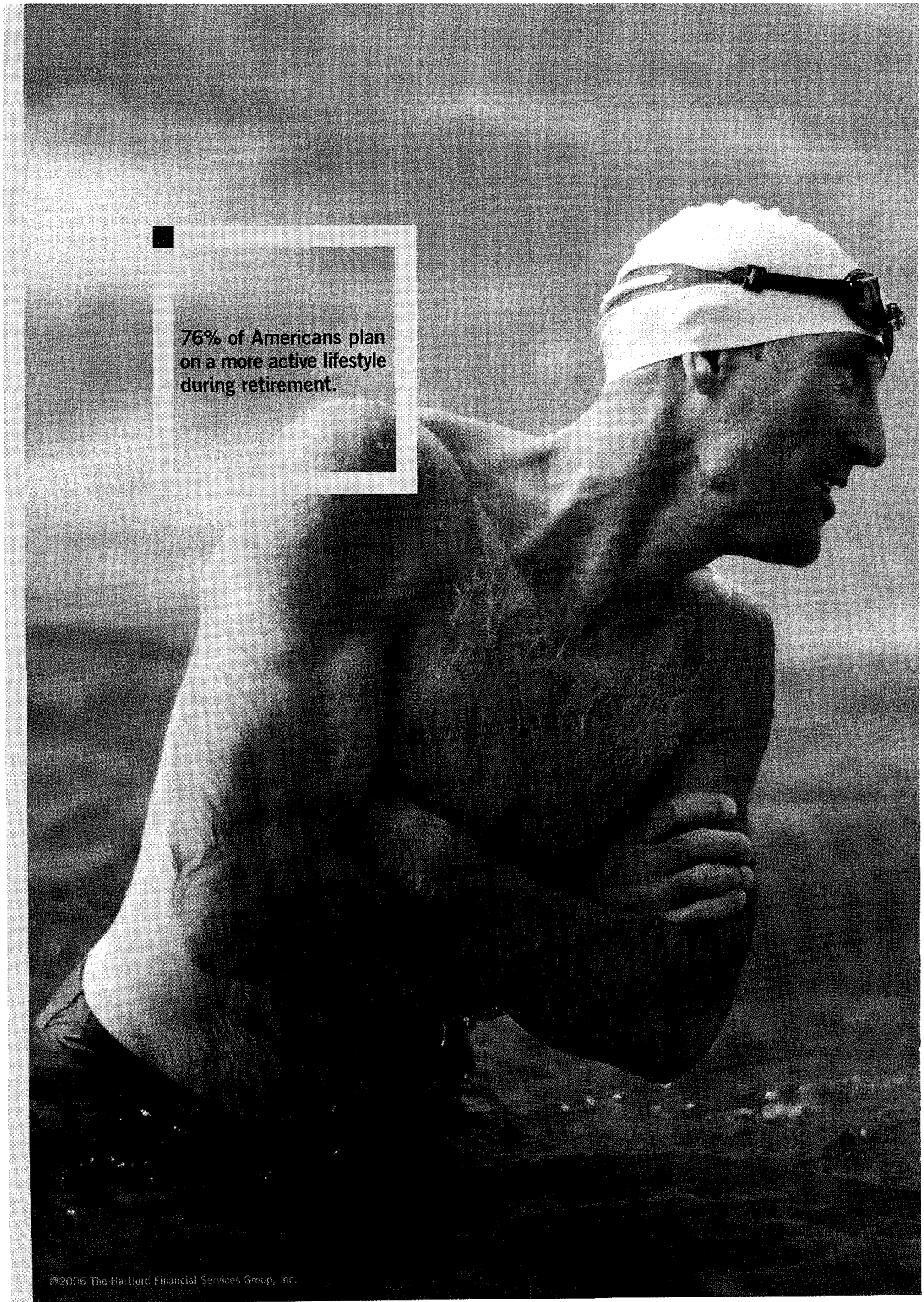


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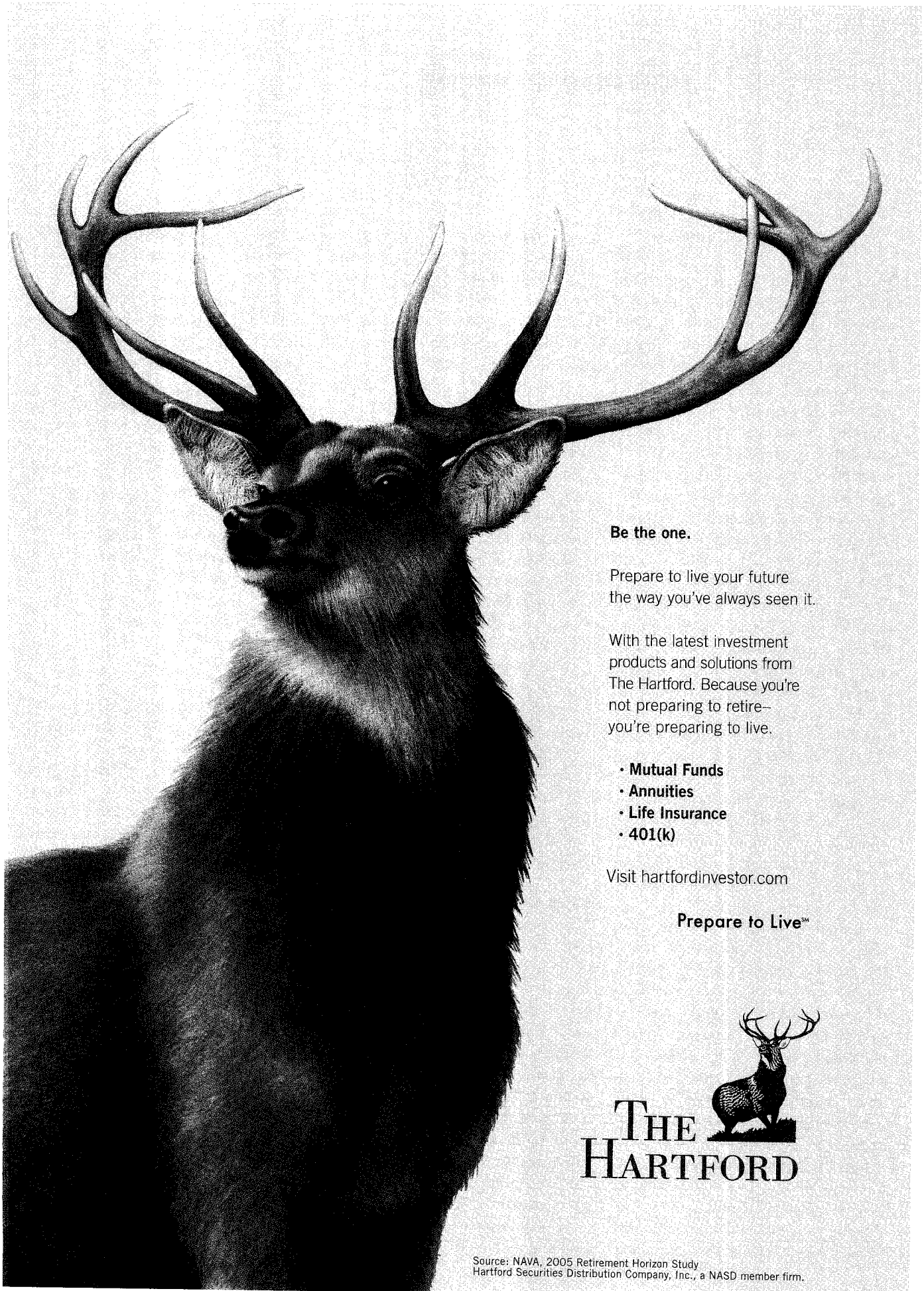

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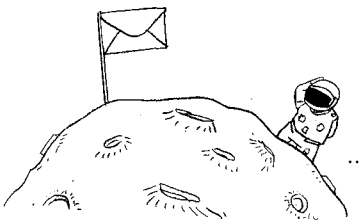

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### The Mommy Warriors

I edited *Mommy Wars* because I was struck by American moms' need to disparage other women in order to feel good about ourselves. Sandra Tsing Loh ("Rhymes With Rich," May *Atlantic*) provides an example of this tendency when she dismisses *Mommy Wars* by attacking the writers for being white and suffering from "afflufemza." The contributors *are* all college educated (as, I imagine, are most *Atlantic* readers), but nearly 20 percent are nonwhite, offering a mix of African-American, Pakistani, and Latina perspectives in a book of only twenty-six contributors. Here are some of the women Tsing Loh disparages as privileged: Natalie Smith Parra, a Latina former welfare mom and immigrant-rights activist; Lila Leff, founder of the Umoja Student Development Corporation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping at-risk Chicago youth; Veronica Chambers, who supports her extended African-American family on her writing income alone; Jane Juska, a grandmother, teacher, and prison literacy volunteer from Berkeley; plus the many stay-at-home moms in the book with $0 listed in their IRS income columns.

Even the more affluent moms write with candor about universal problems women face: cancer, domestic violence, children with special needs, post-partum depression, financial hardship, a mother's suicide, infertility, child abuse, and plain old lousy husbands. Tsing Loh employs a tired misogyny in her attempt to denigrate the moms in the book, and she quotes details of our lives out of context. She derides, for instance, Dawn Drzal's Regina Rubens outfit—and fails to mention that Ms. Drzal's essay recounts a bout of postpartum depression so severe that she contemplated suicide. Monica Buckley Price is berated for complaining about her husband's extended absences—without acknowledgment that she struggled to treat their only child's autism during that period of time. And Tsing Loh ridicules my second marriage, but conveniently leaves out my first—to a man who beat and nearly killed me.

Throughout the article, Tsing Loh suggests that she is superior to the women in my book because she is not white, is not affluent, and sends her child to a public school. Ironically, in 2004 I offered Tsing Loh a chance to share her story in *Mommy Wars*, and the woman who pegs her authority to a lack of material wealth declined via an e-mail that explained, "I generally don't do anthologies because the money tends to be poor … correct me if the pay is in the four digits."

The primal forces of motherhood have the power to unite women rather than divide us. Before we can adequately assist other women—as Tsing Loh rightly encourages women to do—we need to find unity as mothers. Tsing Loh instead seems committed to fostering women's battles with one another.

*Leslie Morgan Steiner*
*Washington, D.C.*

I appreciate much of what Sandra Tsing Loh discusses in "Rhymes With Rich." But saying that "the troubles of the poor … don't seem to lap up much around the ankles of any of these mothers" is unfair to women of all income levels. I'm qualified to write about my feelings as a stay-at-home mom, not about racial or economic diversity. I do wish that I had more fully expressed how grateful I am to have a choice, and I know that the majority of women don't have that option. But I doubt they begrudge me—or judge me for—my choices as hotly as does Tsing Loh.

I was lucky enough to be born standing in the right line, and so were my children. I try to remind them of that every day—whether taking them to volunteer or giving a portion of their allowance (they each get a dollar a week) to the homeless. I realize this sounds like I'm throwing pennies down from the turret of my Georgetown castle. (For the record, it's two bedrooms; my girls share a room. Since writing my essay for *Mommy Wars*, I've moved, divorced, and started writing more to pay some bills.) But I want my children to know that they're fortunate, not entitled. And I want them to be grateful, not guilt-ridden. Believe me, as a freckle-faced WASP living in a privileged enclave, I have enough guilt for all of us.

*Page Evans*
*Author of "Sharks and Jets" from* Mommy Wars
*Washington, D.C.*

I'm sorry Sandra Tsing Loh reviewed the book she wished had been written, rather than *Mommy Wars*. She raises some interesting and valid points about the plights of mothers who work for subsistence wages while trying to raise their own kids (and sometimes other people's). But if we're trying to get to a place where *all* work is valued (and I think this is Tsing Loh's underlying argument), aren't the struggles of the high-earning women also valid? What's more, the immigrant women that Tsing Loh identifies with, in her daughter's Los Angeles magnet school, are working to give their kids the kinds of opportunities the women in the book have—and I'm not sure they would begrudge their more fortunate sisters the choices they've made. Finally, I wonder what Tsing Loh would do if she weren't one of the lucky few to get her child into one of those highly competitive magnet schools? Would she really send her daughter to one of L.A.'s failing, 94 percent minority public



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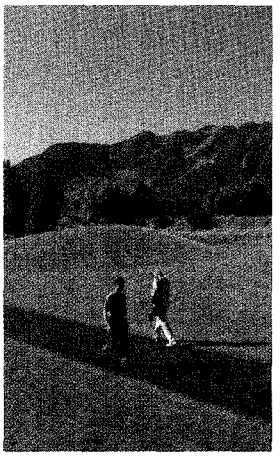

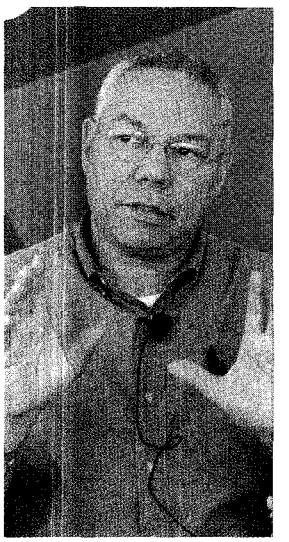

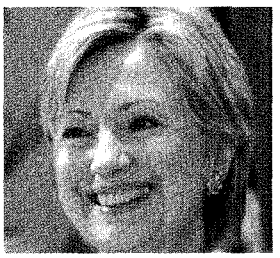

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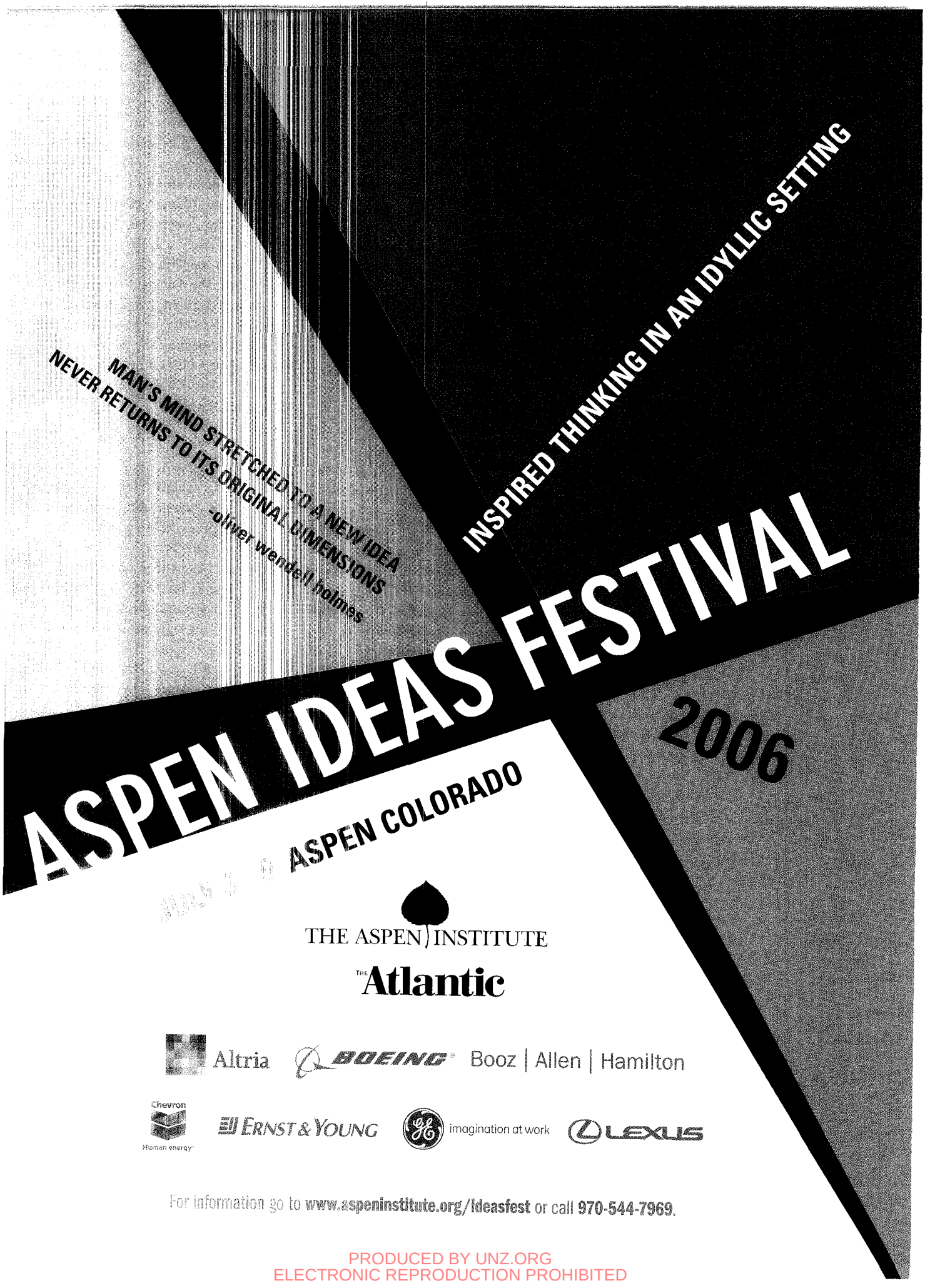


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schools? Or would she join the ranks of those of us she seems to regard as somehow compromised, and make a different choice?
*Dee Dee Myers*
*Washington, D.C.*

***Sandra Tsing Loh replies:***
*Leslie Morgan Steiner writes: "Before we can adequately assist other women ... we need to find unity as mothers." Perhaps we should ask the women who huddled inside the Superdome if they felt they had the luxury of waiting for that hell-freezing-over day (the day I change my pan of Steiner's book to the appropriate rave and we sing "Kumbaya"), or if they would have simply preferred to be handed the damn water bottles already.*

*Unity first, then help—that's a gloomy prognosis for the future of female philanthropy. Because despite the heat of Steiner's rebuttal, I must stubbornly continue to disagree. I find her calculation that "nearly 20 percent" minority is not overwhelmingly white a bit spooky, frankly. She misreads my take on affluent women; my point was not that I'm above "mommy wars" because I'm morally superior, but just the opposite. I'm certain that if I lived in Georgetown or in those Barney Greengrass–fed, Ferragamo-shod, Bugaboo stroller–bashing blocks of the Upper West Side, I too would be driven that certain kind of crazy.*

*But the hot, pulsing, opera-bag-across-the-face core (I think of Anne Bancroft and Shirley MacLaine in* The Turning Point*) of why I find Steiner's quasi-feminist thesis to be spectacularly dishonest comes when she cites my daring to ask for money. (And putting it in quotes is really wonderfully catty—I did laugh.) When Steiner first wrote me to solicit an essay for* Mommy Wars*, she enthusiastically branded her anthology "the next* Bitch in the House*." While* Bitch *ended up a surprise* New York Times *best-seller—no impediment to Steiner securing a Random House contract—I couldn't help recalling that potential* Bitch *essayists had been originally offered about $500 for, say, 3,000 words—one-twelfth the going rate for midcareer magazine work.*

*Thus my quote: "I generally don't do anthologies because the money tends to be poor ... correct me if the pay is in the four digits." Four digits—good lord, that could come to ... $1,000! Write quickly and one might start approaching one-tenth of what Steiner's own investment-banker husband makes in an hour (women, unite!). Yet in the next trickle-down feminist turn, Steiner doubles triumphantly back to reveal me as the cold business mercenary who, sadly, wasn't passionate enough to "share her story." Yes, it's a jungle out there in the women's-angst-anthology-with-all-profits-going-to-the-female-editor world.*

*Bottom line: don't ever ask a media professional who says that women's work should be valued to give you a fair market wage. You'll pay for it later, sister. Rawr!*

*By contrast, I feel that Page Evans is poignantly wrestling with the complex issues we, as America's luckier women, face. I can relate. But Dee Dee Myers's grasp of L.A.'s public-school magnet system is fuzzy; the system is highly competitive only in that kids from the most disadvantaged ZIP codes get in first. My daughter's magnet school is Title I due to poverty and high risk factors—many of her classmates came from Head Start. And yes, we were indeed planning on trying our regular 96 percent Hispanic school, never mind Myers's stated belief that I'd find that* unthinkable *(which itself is fascinating). I really must get to D.C. more often.*

*That said, our magnet school does enjoy a self-selection of parents motivated enough to fill out the government forms required to get their children in. So if we're not guilty, to borrow Evans's alchemical thinking, we are grateful. In fact, I'm grateful enough that my charitable giving this year, which goes largely to local poor non-magnet schools that lack PTAs, will be "in the five digits." Tired misogynist that I am, I don't need female unity to write a check; I just need a pen. And happily, after telling this book reviewer to go to hell, Steiner need not wait to use her Wharton-trained business savvy to invent a way to channel economic resources toward, if not poorer women, causes about which she clearly feels great passion: spousal abuse, postpartum depression, and autism.*

*Now that would impress me. Applause, flowers, chocolates ... It's all standing by.*

## The Desert One Debacle

Mark Bowden's account of the Desert One mission ("The Desert One Debacle," May *Atlantic*) is inaccurate in one significant respect: his assertion that I "directed" Harold Brown, the secretary of defense, to convey to the commanders on the ground that "if they were prepared to go ahead with only five choppers, they had White House approval." I did no such thing. I reported to the president about the ongoing mishap and urged him to inquire, through Harold Brown, whether the mission commander would be prepared to go forward with a smaller number of available helicopters. The commander, as it turned out, wisely decided that this would not be workable. A detailed account of that episode, confirming the above, is to be found on page 498 of my White House memoir, *Power and Principle.*
*Zbigniew Brzezinski*
*Washington, D.C.*

Mark Bowden accepts mission commander Charles Beckwith's claim that without six helicopters the mission could not proceed, because Beckwith could not transport his entire rescue team from Desert One to the hide site outside Tehran. But there were solutions to the transportation problem. Colonel Jerry King, the operations planner for the mission, suggested that helicopter crews be reduced (each helicopter had a crew of five), leaving the gunners and their equipment behind to create additional space for the rescue team. The gunners were superfluous, as the rescue team was armed to the teeth. Removing them would have accommodated at least ten of the men, and removing one or both of the internal auxiliary fuel tanks would have provided room for the rest. The flight to the hide site was only 270 miles, and the plan was to jettison the auxiliary tanks at the hide site anyway, to make room for the hostages.

Alternatively, the helicopter with the mechanical failure could have continued the mission. The failure turned out to be a burned-out hydraulic pump on the *backup* flight-controls system. In combat situations, aircraft have flown without backup controls, and flying in a spare pump from the *Nimitz* was also feasible: the jet could have made the trip in two hours, and the repair would have taken about an hour. The helicopter would have had to spend the day at Desert One and proceed to the hide


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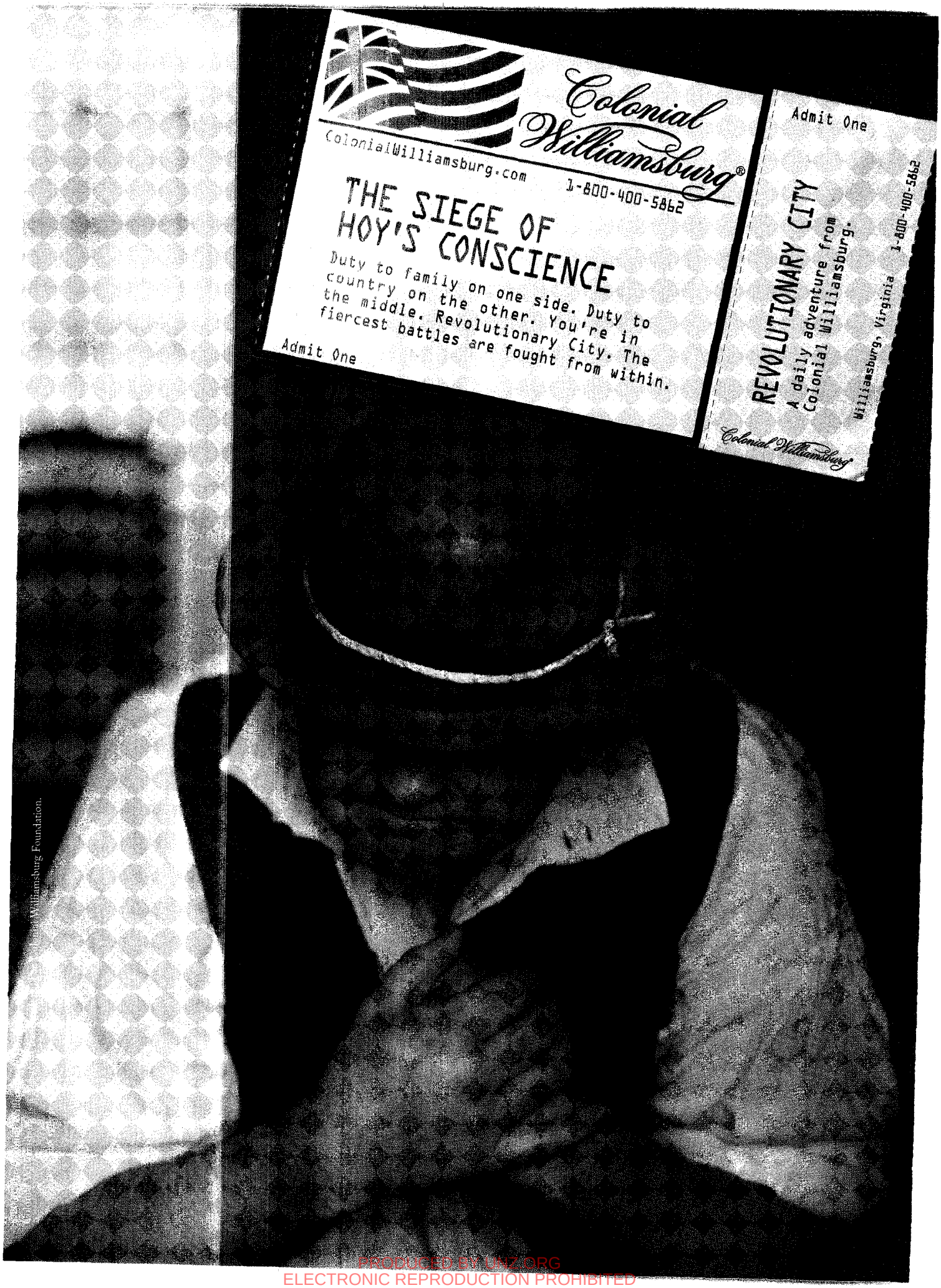


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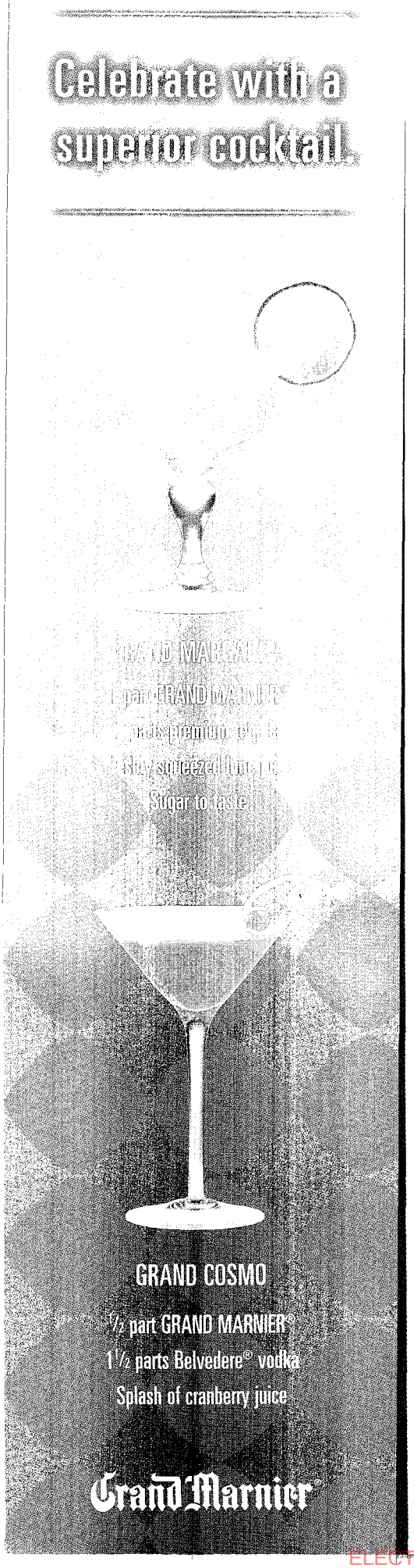


site the following evening, but it would have arrived in plenty of time for the mission, which was not to commence until after midnight the next day.

Most of these solutions were suggested at the time. That President Carter decided not to proceed anyway raises questions about his true intentions.

*Professor Richard C. Thornton*
*George Washington University*
*Washington, D.C.*

In "The Desert One Debacle," Mark Bowden writes, "Days earlier the entire force had flown from Florida to Egypt on big Army jet transports." The Army does not have big jet transports. Those planes would have been provided by the Air Force.

*Steve Harper*
*Fayetteville, N.C.*

Some of the charts that Mark Bowden uses to depict aircraft positioning in the Atlantic Online supplement to his article very closely resemble those in my book, *The Guts to Try*, and some bits and pieces of dialogue and comments, unique to my book, show up in Bowden's piece. I do not see any reference or credit for this material.

*James H. Kyle, Col., U.S. Air Force (Ret.)*
*Honolulu, Hawaii*

***Mark Bowden replies:***

*I am sorry for the error in portraying Mr. Brzezinski's advice, am grateful for his correction, and will see that it makes it into the book and onto my Web site. Mr. Harper is exactly right about the transports being Air Force, not Army, a correction that I have made to the book and Web site.*

*Colonel Kyle's book,* The Guts to Try, *is referenced as a source in my book,* Guests of the Ayatollah, *from which the May cover story was excerpted. His is one of the better accounts of the rescue mission, and I recommend it to anyone interested in the incident. My story was based primarily on interviews with participants in the mission, many of whom have never been interviewed, by Colonel Kyle or anyone else. Since we did interview some of the same men, however, and wrote about the same episode, it is hardly surprising that some snatches of dialogue and descriptions of the position of aircraft would be similar or the same. If Colonel Kyle wishes to correct significant inadequacies or errors in my account, I will be grateful.*

*Professor Thornton notes correctly, as I did in the story, that serious consideration was given to proceeding with the mission using only five helicopters, and while there was some support for going ahead, the decision was made to abort, as pre-planning for the mission dictated. I have not made an effort to critique or second-guess that decision; it is an argument that I leave to those who know a lot more about helicopters and load requirements than I do. President Carter left the decision to the men who were risking their lives on the mission, which I think was the right thing to do.*

### Defending Hugo Chávez

Throughout his essay on controversial Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez ("The Talented Mr. Chávez," May *Atlantic*), Franklin Foer adopts the rhetoric and misrepresentations of Chávez's more dishonest opponents. For example, he writes that the failed 2002 coup attempt against Chávez was led by high military officials "nervous about the president's feints toward a fully nationalized economy." This ignores the role of politicians, the business sector, and the corporate media in the destabilization campaign leading to the coup, and it misconstrues Chávez's economic program. At his most radical, and despite his rhetoric, Chávez calls for a mixed economy—and the private sector has expanded faster than the public sector since he took office seven years ago.

Foer distorts regional politics. The Venezuelan military cannot patrol every inch of its country's 1,379-mile border with Colombia, yet Chávez does not, as Foer implies, have a policy allowing the FARC guerrillas to freely cross into Venezuela's territory. In fact, Chávez, concerned with preventing incursions of right-wing paramilitaries from Colombia, has established good working relations with his ideological opposite, Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, much to the chagrin of leftist supporters. Foer recycles the claims of Chávez's opponents, including those in the Pentagon, and so is blind to the fact that the real threat to regional stability comes from right-wing paramilitaries.

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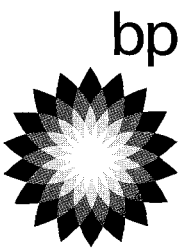


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Foer writes that the poverty rate has risen from 43 percent to 53 percent during Chávez's presidency. But the 53 percent figure is from the first quarter of 2004, and the Venezuelan economy has grown by more than 28 percent (in real, inflation-adjusted terms) since then, with poverty falling to 37 percent. The earlier jump in poverty was, to a large extent, a direct result of the 2002–2003 opposition-led oil strike, which crippled the economy and sent unemployment soaring. Yet even the current decline in the official poverty rate does not capture the enormous gains from increased social spending—$17 billion this year—on health care, education, and subsidized food. Foer ridicules these programs, but there is broad agreement among scholars of Latin America, many sharply critical of Chavismo, that these *misiones* are an innovative experiment in a region where nearly half the population lives in extreme poverty.

Foer suggests that Venezuelan public opinion is deeply divided over Chávez, but it is not an equal division. Chávez's approval rating consistently hovers between 60 and 70 percent, and he leads all potential presidential contenders in the polls. Also, a survey by the respected Chilean polling firm Latinobarómetro found that when asked to rank how democratic their country is on a scale of 1 (not democratic) to 10 (totally democratic), Venezuelans scored their country at 7.6, considerably better than the regional average of 5.5.

At one point Foer acknowledges that Latin America's "leftward swing" was a reaction against the free-market policies that "failed to deliver on their much-hyped promise of prosperity." But then he states that Chávez threatens to disrupt an "embrace of market capitalism [that] seemed to bring relative prosperity and genuine stability within grasp." Here Foer misses the crucial development driving the turn left in Latin America: the disastrous economic failures of the last twenty-five years. Per capita income (or gross domestic product) has grown by only 10 percent over the last quarter century, the worst such performance in more than 100 years. Today, 213 million Latin Americans, or 40 percent of the population, are destitute.



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Finally, Foer's presentation of Latin American politics as a contest between two lefts, one acceptable and one not, is overly simplistic. Latin American leaders themselves don't buy it. Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, or Lula, has been one of Chávez's biggest defenders—not, as Foer deduces, because he is scared of his base, but because the two share many goals, including diversifying sources of investment and furthering regional economic integration. Even Chile's former President Ricardo Lagos, the kind of responsible, left-of-center politician extolled by Foer, recently told the United States to back off its criticisms of Venezuela. It would be a "mistake," he said, to "demonize Hugo Chávez." Foer should heed the advice of the Latin American leaders that he respects.

*Greg Grandin, New York University; John Womack, Harvard University; Deborah Levenson, Boston College; Charles Hale, University of Texas at Austin; Fernando Coronil, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor; Jocelyn Olcott, Duke University; Gilbert Joseph, Yale University; Julie Skurski, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor; Cindy Forster, Scripps College; Mark Healey, University of California at Berkeley; Daniel Hellinger, Webster University; Miguel Tinker-Salas, Pomona College; Mark Weisbrot, Center for Economic and Policy Research*

***Franklin Foer replies:***

*Hugo Chávez has been skilled in winning a following on the American Left, especially within the academy. It's striking, however, that his defenders take so little time to rebut the most damning criticism of the man: his anti-democratic impulse. Chávez has gutted many of the governmental institutions that stood in his way and does little to hide his desire to remain in office for decades.*

*To respond point by point: I don't disagree with the letter writers' characterization of the 2002 coup. Chávez had alienated many sectors of the Venezuelan elite, as well as the country's middle class. The military was merely the actor that enabled the coup to temporarily succeed. Furthermore, I never asserted that Chávez wants to impose a Cuban-style economy on the country, and I don't think that is his intention. But he occasionally feints in that*


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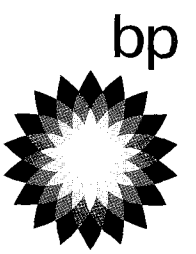


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*direction, and in the months before the coup, his rhetoric was clearly on the radical side.*

*The letter writers spend considerable time discussing the FARC, which made only a cameo appearance in my piece. I agree that the Venezuelan border is porous, and that Chávez's relationship to the guerillas is mixed. Has he willfully ignored their presence at times? I'm not sure. But the intelligence officials I cited say he has. And my point was hardly an ideological one. The United States has vital interests in Latin America. It can't afford hostile governments that fail to cooperate in its counter-narcotics operations. Chávez, who prohibits American surveillance planes from entering his country's airspace, has stymied those efforts.*

*On the question of poverty, I used data published in the middle of last year, just as I began reporting my essay. There was no willful twisting of evidence. Once again, I don't disagree with the letter writers' points. The* misiones *are innovative and do help the Venezuelan people, especially in reversing feelings of exclusion. But they are designed as short-term infusions of cash, not long-term solutions to deep social problems. Because they are so scattershot—because they do little to build new health-care or educational systems, for instance—they will never provide the engine for genuine progress. Why, for instance, has infant mortality increased under Chávez's watch?*

*Is Venezuelan society deeply divided? I don't see how anyone could deny this claim. The Chavistas and the opposition despise one another and are locked in mortal political combat. Street protests are part of the fabric of Venezuelan life. Labor unions, the middle class, and most of the big newspapers are virulently anti-Chávez. Instead of reconciling with opponents—or even debating them—Chávez has defined them as American stooges, as un-Venezuelan.*

*The writers cite Ricardo Lagos's praise of Chávez. This, sadly, proves a point that I make in the article: that pragmatic Latin American leaders are afraid to challenge Chávez, because the Latin American center-left adores him.*

### Iran Goes Nuclear

James Fallows's piece ("The Nuclear Power Beside Iraq," May *Atlantic*) argues that "the worst option would be a military strike" in dealing with Iran's nuclear ambitions. But the word *worst* connotes comparison. Fallows details the many difficulties a military operation might face. But I searched in vain for the alternative approaches that he deems to be better than "the worst." That omission seems representative of the dilemma facing the international community.

*Mark Sherrill*
*McLean, Va.*

***James Fallows replies:***

*There are two implied alternatives. One is finding a diplomatic way to dissuade Iran from building nuclear weapons, which is most often discussed in the context of a "grand bargain" involving all aspects of political, economic, and military relations between Iran and other powers, mainly the United States. The other choice is to rely on robust and no-kidding deterrence to make sure that an Iranian bomb is never used, which is the same policy the United States relies on to be sure that Russia, China, Pakistan, and India do not use their nuclear bombs.*

### Shaken, Not Stirred

Christopher Hitchens belittles Ian Fleming's "role selection" ("Bottoms Up," April *Atlantic*), specifically his invitation to Noël Coward to play Dr. No. But Coward was successful in many roles, comic and serious, and he would likely have done a fine job (playing it either coldly evil or over-the-top camp).

Then there is Hitchens's potshot at John F. Kennedy's 1961 *Life* magazine reading list, which included *From Russia With Love*. But the other nine books were very different: *Montrose*, by John Buchan; *Melbourne*, by David Cecil; *Marlborough*, by Winston Churchill; *John Quincy Adams*, by Samuel Flagg Bemis; *The Emergence of Lincoln*, by Allan Nevins; *The Price of Union*, by Herbert Agar; *John C. Calhoun, American Portrait*, by Margaret L. Coit; *Byron in Italy*, by Peter Quennell; and Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*.

*Alecia Flores*
*Penryn, Calif.*

***Christopher Hitchens replies:***

*I too would have adored to see Noël Coward playing Dr. No, but I can't then visualize the same motion picture (or novel). As for Kennedy's reading list, Ms. Flores is entitled to believe if she chooses that the boy president had really read those books. (She may also believe if she chooses that the young Kennedy, and not Ted Sorenson, was the author of* Profiles in Courage.*) I feel quite confident, however, that the Fleming selection on that list was made by the Galahad of Camelot himself and not by an anxious staffer striving to give a more weighty impression.*

### Life and Death in the IRA

One of the men Matthew Teague interviewed for his story about the IRA ("Double Blind," April *Atlantic*) was Denis Donaldson, "the legendary IRA hunger-striker" who had gone into hiding. Shockingly, it was recently reported that the same Denis Donaldson had been shot to death after having "been tortured before being killed—apparently with one or two shotgun blasts to his head—inside his isolated home near Glenties, County Donegal, in northwest Ireland."

Can we please have a comment by Mr. Teague?

*LaVerne Barnes*
*Vancouver, British Columbia*

***Matthew Teague replies:***

*I was, of course, shocked by the news of Donaldson's death—and my heart goes out to Mrs. Donaldson, whom I met while reporting the story. That's the ultimate tragedy within the story: beneath the intrigue, the spying, and the politics, real men and women die, and real families suffer.*

### Advice and Consent

In "Primary Sources" (May *Atlantic*), the "In Search of Lost Time" item says that the worst traffic bottleneck costs 27,144 lost hours per year. Those are thousands of hours, not hours, so the correct number is 27,144,000.

*George Terhune*
*Quincy, Calif.*

***The Editors reply:***

*Mr. Terhune is correct. We regret the error.*



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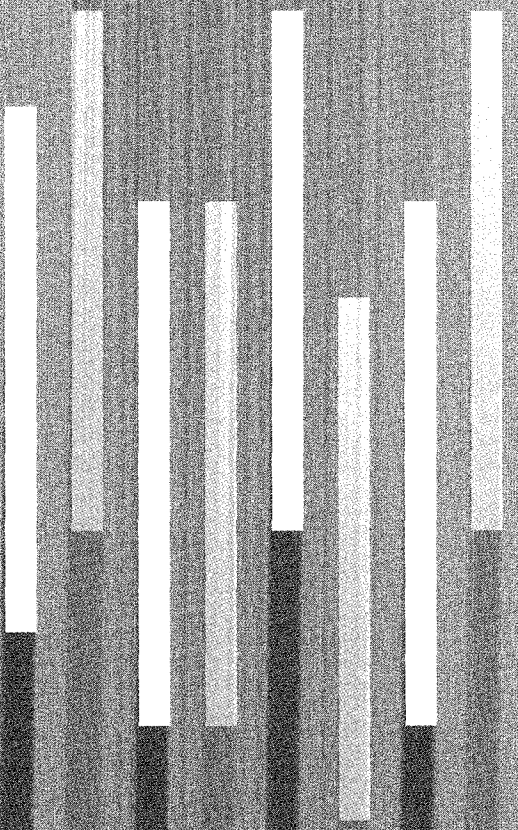

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# THE AGENDA



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COMMENT

## Containing Iran

*Cold War strategies might help us handle Tehran's nuclear ambitions*

BY JONATHAN RAUCH

Boil away the verbiage, and Americans' reaction to Iran's apparent drive for nuclear weapons amounts to: "Oh, no!" It's a reasonable reaction. A bitter enemy appears determined to acquire fearsome weapons, or the capability to produce them (which comes to the same thing). A preventive military strike might do little more than buy a couple of years, and at a steep price. Iran might drop a bomb on Israel; it might give the bomb to terrorists; it might use the bomb to blackmail and dominate the Middle East; it might feel emboldened to export terror and insurgency without constraint.

"Iran armed with a nuclear weapon poses a grave threat to the security of the world," President Bush said in January. Various other assessments make Bush's sound comparatively low-key. In September, Congressman Trent Franks, a Republican from Arizona, called Iran a "diabolical threat to Western civilization" whose ambitions, if not stopped, "will lead to a disastrous situation with catastrophic consequences worldwide."

The ascendancy of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad gives particular cause for alarm, not least because he has called the Holocaust a myth, renewed Iran's commitment to eliminate Israel, and declared that anyone who objects to Iran's achieving nuclear capability should "be angry and die of this anger." Writing in Britain's *Sunday Telegraph*, the historian Niall Ferguson imagines the upshot: Iran and Israel engage in a devastating nuclear exchange; the resulting "Great Gulf War" marks the end of the oil age—even, perhaps, "the twilight of the West."

Maybe. To repeat: "Oh, no!" is a reasonable reaction. A uranium-enriched Ahmadinejad is a prospect the United States should seek strenuously to avoid, even if the cost is high. But if resignation is the wrong attitude, so is panic. If Iran emerges as a nuclear state, one country in the world will be providentially equipped with decades of applicable experience and a proven strategic template. The country is the United States, the experience is the Cold War, and the template is containment.

Here are some things we have seen before: a nuclear-armed country with a brittle and aggressive ideology, world-revolutionary aspirations, and a belief in the historic inevitability of its triumph against a decadent and ultimately hollow West. In that country, an unpopular and divided regime, with hard-liners and relative pragmatists squabbling



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for influence. A crumbling, resource-dependent economy. A paranoid worldview in which America is an omnipresent military and ideological threat. A tactical predilection for supporting and manipulating insurgent proxies around the world, instead of engaging in direct confrontations. Above all, a belief that nuclear weapons are strategically essential to deter the United States and maintain national prestige.

Yes—but the Soviet Union was deterrable. Would the same be true of a nuclear Iran? No one knows, and no one wants to find out, and Ahmadinejad's trash-talking is alarming. Still, that Iran will be "a suicide bomber with a radioactive waist" (as one commentator put it recently) is not a given. The Brookings Institution's Kenneth M. Pollack, the author of *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America*, points out that Iran has been aggressively anti-American "but not reckless." He explains, "These guys try to press the edge of the envelope, but if they find they've pressed too far, they pull back." Behaviorally, if not rhetorically, the Iranians seem more akin to the opportunistic Nikita Khrushchev of the Cuban missile crisis than the delusional Saddam Hussein of the Kuwait invasion and the Iraq War.

One can hardly count on predictability from the likes of Ahmadinejad. But the presidency is only one of a number of competing Iranian power centers; the supreme ruler is Iran's top cleric, Ayatollah Ali Khamanei. The fact that Ahmadinejad and his energetic faction are vying for control is not reassuring, but it is worth remembering that Stalin and Khrushchev were not reassuring figures either. Only in hindsight is it evident that *they* were deterrable.

"Many today forget that Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao Zedong's China were seen as more threatening in both capabilities and intentions than are today's mullahs in Tehran," writes Richard K. Betts, of Columbia University's Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies, in *The National Interest*. Even if the Cold War Soviet leadership lacked the Armageddon-minded nuttiness of Ahmadinejad, it was more than paranoid enough to be frightening. "What made things very dangerous," says Timothy Naftali, a University of Virginia Cold War historian, "was that the Soviets were at times willing to be brinksmen in a nuclear world."

When American strategists chose to deter and contain the Soviet Union, they didn't know it to be deterrable and containable. At times, respectable strategists thought it wasn't. Rather, the United States settled for the deter-and-contain model because the other options seemed worse.

In the end, of course, the Cold War strategy succeeded, spectacularly. The United States not only got regime change in the Soviet Union, it got it without the kind of conflagration or implosion that the collapse of a nuclear superpower might easily have brought. The West was lucky, no doubt, but it was also patient and, on the whole, skillful.

Iran is, if anything, more vulnerable to long-term pressure than the USSR was. It is smaller and weaker in every dimension. Its economy is a mess. Its oil weapon fires backward as well as forward, because oil sales keep Iran's economy afloat. And, unlike the Soviet Union, Iran has no conceivable hope of disarming or crippling America with a first strike; America's deterrent against Iran is massive, credible, and impregnable.

During the Cold War, once a credible deterrent was in place, containment meant both hemming in the Soviets (between NATO and the Pacific alliances) and drawing them into arms-control talks and security arrangements and grain deals that made trigger fingers less twitchy. The two approaches, though often in tension, were not mutually exclusive, nor would they be in the case of a nuclear Iran. One can envision a regional consortium aimed at containing Iran—what Pollack calls a NATO for the Persian Gulf. The Gulf Cooperation Council, along with Iraq, Turkey, Jordan, and others in the region, might join with the United States (and maybe Europe) to agree on countermeasures to be used if Iran invaded one of them, proliferated nukes, or destabilized its neighbors. At the same time, the consortium might also negotiate a pact in which Tehran agreed not to cross any of those red lines, in exchange for security guarantees.

Americans would see such an agreement as a deal with the devil, and they'd be right. But the United States dealt with the Soviets, who were at least as murderous as the mullahs and far mightier, and the end result was regime change. It took a while, but containment is a long game, and it's a game on which the United States wrote the book.

The example of the Cold War does not counsel complacency in the face of Iran's nuclear exertions. Nor does it imply that force is off the table. It does counsel calm. If we appear deathly afraid of atomic ayatollahs, we may do less to deter them from going nuclear than to convince them that going nuclear will deter us.

*Jonathan Rauch is a correspondent for* The Atlantic *and a guest scholar at the Brookings Institution.*

JOHN RITTER



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# Emigration Reform

A stop sign in Boca Chica, Texas, marks the end of Route 4. Ahead lies the Gulf of Mexico, and to the right (out of the picture frame), the mouth of the Rio Grande. The border area between Texas and the eastern edge of Mexico is open and largely unpopulated, but it is seldom chosen for illegal crossings.

PHOTOGRAPH BY HECTOR MATA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



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WASHINGTON

# Purple Mountains

*Could the interior West—long seen as an archetypal red region—be turning blue? The fate of the Republican Party may hinge on the answer*

BY RYAN SAGER

After the 2004 election, plenty of people noted that a shift of 60,000-odd votes in Ohio would have handed the Electoral College to John Kerry. But there was another place—less remarked upon—where a shift of similar magnitude would have done the same trick: the Southwest. Fewer than 70,000 votes among Colorado, Nevada, and New Mexico, with their collective nineteen electoral votes, could have swung the election just as surely as Ohio's 60,000. And with George W. Bush winning by margins of 5 percentage points, 3 points, and 1 point, respectively, these were swing states by any definition of the term.

Those who don't follow politics closely could be forgiven for feeling surprised. In recent years, the political geography of the West has seemed clear and simple: the Pacific Coast states are blue, and the interior West is red. But while the Pacific Coast is likely to stay solidly blue for the foreseeable future, the partisan tilt of the eight states of the interior West—Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming—is changing. These states will be worth watching in the November elections. And the region's political hue in 2008 will speak not only to the question of who wins the White House but also to the durability and future character of the Republican coalition.

Signs of a possible Democratic resurgence in the West have been slowly accumulating since 2000. In 2004, Democrats took over both chambers of the Colorado legislature and sent the Democrat Ken Salazar to the U.S. Senate to replace a retiring Republican, Ben Nighthorse Campbell; Salazar's brother John also won the open U.S. House seat in Colorado's Third District, which was vacated by a Republican. (This turned out to be one of only two open Republican seats in the House picked up by Democrats that year.)

**THE GREAT REALIGNMENT**

*Democratic Party strength by region (percentage of seats)*

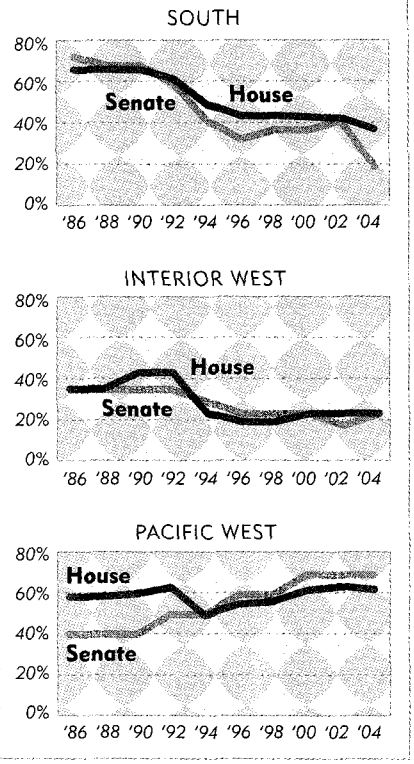


CHART SOURCE: VITAL STATISTICS ON CONGRESS

That same year, Montana elected its first Democratic governor in two decades: Brian Schweitzer, a rancher who flaunted his love of guns. Democrats won four out of five statewide offices in that election and also took control of Montana's house and senate. Counting Schweitzer, Democrats now hold the governorships of four of the eight states that make up the interior West; in 2000, they held none. New Mexico's Bill Richardson and Wyoming's Dave Freudenthal each replaced two-term Republican governors in 2002, the same year that Janet Napolitano became the first elected Democratic governor of Arizona since the 1980s. While it's possible to read too much into victories at the state level, *something* is happening throughout the West.

What is it? In part, the region's changing demography is changing its political sensibility. It's no secret that the West is becoming more Hispanic, and Hispanics tend to cast their ballots for Democrats. Republicans made a lot of noise after the 2004 election about their inroads with this population, and initial exit polls showed Bush taking 44 percent of the Hispanic vote nationwide. But later, more careful reviews deflated that figure to 40 percent or less, with much of Bush's support clustered in Texas and Florida. What's more, whatever gains Bush has made among Hispanics seem to begin and end with him. Hispanic party identification consistently registers roughly two to one in favor of the Democrats, and hasn't shown any major swing toward the GOP under Bush. Continuing growth of the Hispanic population in the interior West is bad news for Republicans.

It's not just Hispanics, though. Another politically significant population is also growing quickly throughout the interior West: erstwhile Californians. The congested, generally liberal population centers of California are overflowing—and as they do, it's as if a bucket of blue paint were spilling over the West. More than 400,000 Arizonans and 360,000 Nevadans were born in California. The thinly populated mountain West states are slowly taking on a left-coast character as well: as of the last census, 122,000 native Californians lived in Idaho (total population 1.3 million) while 47,000 lived in Montana (900,000) and 21,000 lived in Wyoming (490,000).

But ultimately, Democratic inroads in the region are less the result of demographic change than of regional discontent with the Republican Party—discontent that has been deepening for quite some time. The story of the Republican Party's march to political dominance over the last five decades has been, at its core, a story about the political realignment of the South, first at the presidential level in 1968 and 1972 and then at the congressional level in 1994. That realignment is by now complete—the GOP could hardly dominate the region more thoroughly. But as the South has become central to Republican



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THE LIST

## LEAPS OF FAITH

*When pop stars get religion*

In the year since Michael Jackson's acquittal on charges of child molestation, the reclusive singer has abandoned Neverland Ranch for Bahrain, where he's been a guest of the royal family. Jackson recently promised to build a mosque in the tiny kingdom, and he was spotted in a Bahraini mall wearing a flowing abaya robe, traditionally the garb of Muslim women. In March, CBS News reported that the King of Pop, raised a Jehovah's Witness, might soon convert to Islam. Below is a selection of famous entertainers who changed faiths in midcareer, along with a few details on how well each conversion took.

—*ROSS DOUTHAT*

### 1. SAMMY DAVIS JR. (Judaism)

This Rat Packer was born to Christian parents, but didn't practice a faith until he lost his eye in a 1954 car crash. While recovering, Davis found himself poring over a history of Judaism. His eventual conversion prompted giggles and suspicion among Jews and Gentiles alike. But though his beliefs drifted over the years—toward reincarnation and even Satanism, briefly—he never gave up his adopted faith, and died with a rabbi by his side. And the jokes were great: "I'm colored, Jewish, and Puerto Rican," he would say. "When I move into a neighborhood, I wipe it out!"

### 2. CAT STEVENS (Islam)

Raised Greek Orthodox, the British-born Stevens converted to Islam in 1977, following years of spiritual searching prompted by a bout of tuberculosis. Taking the name Yusuf Islam, he gave up music entirely, entered an arranged marriage, and founded a Muslim school in London. He's been dogged by controversy: in the late 1980s, he seemed to endorse the fatwa against Salman Rushdie; he was deported from Israel in 2000 amid allegations that he supported Hamas; and he appeared on a U.S.-government "no-fly" list after September 11. Of late, his anti-music stance has softened: in 1998 he released an album in support of the Bosnian Muslims, and he is reportedly working on a new pop album.

### 3. BOB DYLAN (Christianity)

The Jewish singer-songwriter became a born-again Christian in 1979, after experiencing what he later described as "this vision and feeling" of Christ's presence. His songs became explicitly religious, laced with fire-and-brimstone themes, and many fans and critics abandoned him (though some of the music from this era is now considered to rank among Dylan's best). Then his zeal seemed to wane: he reportedly flirted with an orthodox Hasidic sect, the Lubavitchers, and became coy about his exact beliefs. In a 1997 interview, he associated his religion with the music of his youth. "Those old songs are my lexicon and my prayer book," Dylan said. "I believe in a God of time and space, but if people ask me about that, my impulse is to point them back toward those songs."

### 4. ADAM YAUCH (Buddhism)

The trash-talking, Jewish-born Beastie Boys frontman became a Buddhist after encountering Tibetan refugees during a snowboarding trip in Nepal. He organized a series of Tibetan Freedom Concerts and donated royalties from Buddhism-inspired songs like "Bodhisattva Vow" to the Tibetan cause. He even briefly considered becoming a Buddhist monk; instead, he married Dechen Wangdu, a Tibetan-American woman he met at a speech by the Dalai Lama.

### 5. MADONNA (Kabbalah)

After trading on her girlhood Catholicism for years, in the late 1990s the pop star embraced Kabbalah, a form of Jewish mysticism repackaged into a Hollywood-friendly faith (or cult, to its critics) by the Los Angeles Kabbalah Centre. Madonna reportedly took the biblical name Esther after being told she was a reincarnation of the biblical queen, and she has donated almost $20 million to her new religion. She has also drawn other celebrities—including Britney Spears, David Beckham, Demi Moore, and Ashton Kutcher—into its orbit.

Party strategy, its particular flavor of social conservatism, moral certitude, and activist government has infused the national party's character. This is slowly alienating the other major bloc in the Republican coalition: small-government conservatives, especially those who value individual liberty most highly.

While fissures run between these two groups in every state, there is also a larger geography to the modern Republican Party's dilemma. In balancing the religious Right against the libertarian Right, the GOP balances the South against the West. (The Midwest is something of a muddle in between.) Bush-style big-government conservatism has tilted the party's regional balance and put the West in play.

Differences between the West and the South begin with religion. Generally, Republican strongholds have lots of evangelicals, Democratic strongholds have very few, and swing states are in between. By this rule of thumb, the interior Southwest fits neatly into the "swing" category. But so does the interior Northwest, which is typically considered more socially conservative and more solidly Republican. Evangelicals make up between 29 percent and 33 percent of the population in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming—figures much closer to California's 28 percent or Maine's 26 percent than to Virginia's 41 percent or Texas's 51 percent.

A survey conducted last year by the Pew Research Center illustrates the cultural gulf between the South and the interior West—where social attitudes often look surprisingly close to those of blue-state northeasterners and Pacific Coasters. For instance, almost twice as many people in the interior West say that religion is "not that important to me" as say the same in the South (30 percent versus 17 percent); both the Pacific Coast and the Northeast also hover at around 30 percent on that question. On gay rights, only 39 percent of southerners think homosexuality "should be accepted by society," while 53 percent in the interior West support tolerance of gays. (That figure bumps up to 60 percent on the Pacific Coast and in the Northeast.) Similarly, 53 percent of southerners think public-school libraries should ban "books that contain dangerous ideas," versus 44 percent in the interior West.

JOHN RITTER



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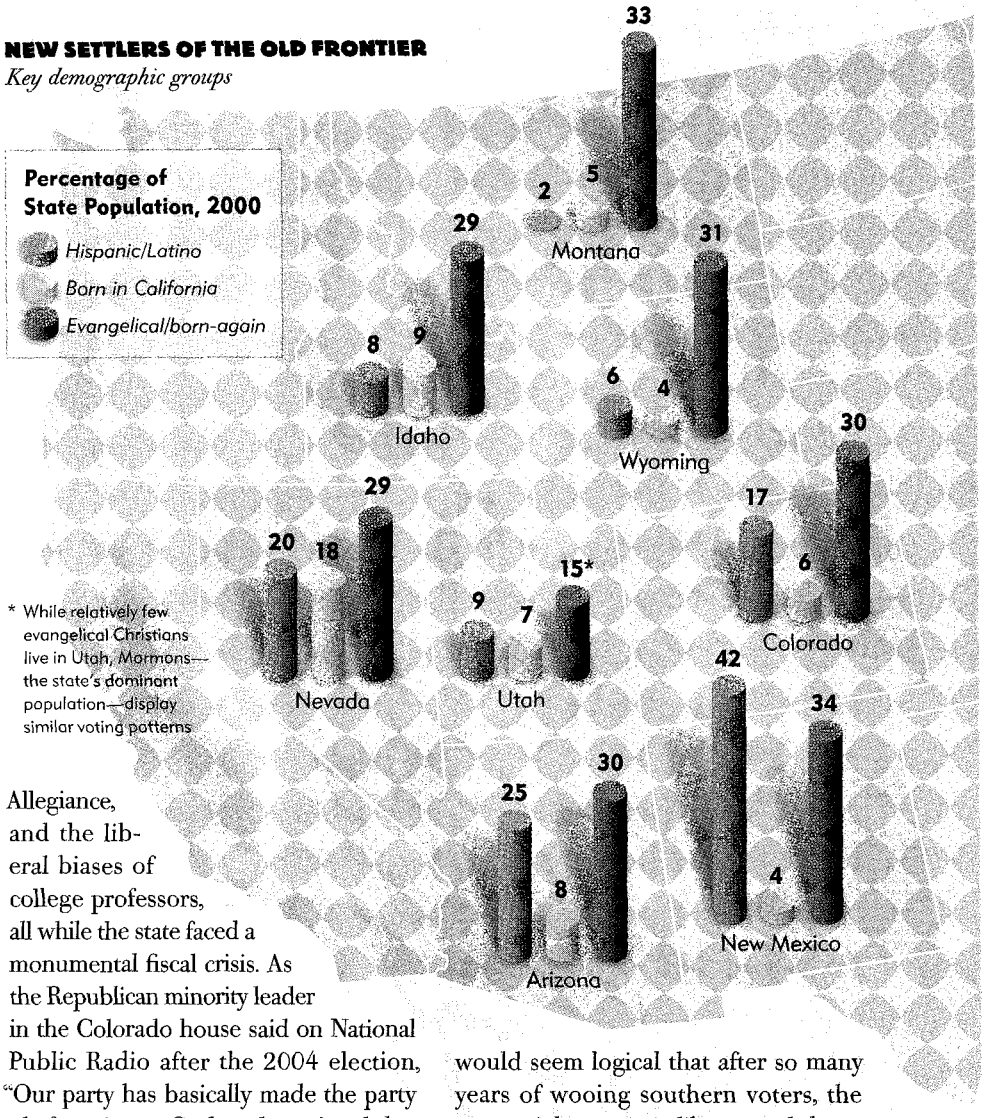
The interior West has a socially libertarian and anti-federal government streak as long as the Rocky Mountains. Nevada, Colorado, and Montana have laws decriminalizing medical marijuana use, placing those states in the company of some of the bluest in the nation. State legislatures in Colorado, Idaho, and Montana have passed resolutions denouncing the Patriot Act. Colorado and Utah have openly rebelled against No Child Left Behind's federal testing regime by passing laws exempting themselves from it.

Of course, the alienation of western Republicans and independents does not necessarily imply a sudden ardor for all of the Democratic Party's ideals. Westerners are particularly unlikely to be convinced that Wal-Mart, oil companies, and other "bad corporate citizens" are preventing them from getting ahead; the West is about pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. Likewise, Democrats were ruined for a generation in the region by gaining reputations as owl-obsessed gun grabbers—and while environmental protection is now relatively popular there, many Westerners remain wary of Democratic intentions. More generally, *small government* is not a term often associated with the Democratic Party.

Bush's GOP, however, is making a Democratic pitch to libertarian-minded voters more credible. The Republican Party is rapidly losing its identity as the party of fiscal responsibility and small government. And Republican intrusions into private and local affairs—think Terri Schiavo—are making Democrats look comparatively restrained. It's counterintuitive, but the current Republican fixation with social hot buttons could be a boon to Democrats in much of the interior West.

There's widespread agreement among Democrats that Howard Dean's party apparatus "gets" its opportunity out West and is beginning to invest there after years of neglect. Republicans, meanwhile, have had a hard time adjusting. Colorado's GOP seems to be walking off the same Christian Right cliff that California's did in the 1990s. Republicans lost control of the Colorado legislature in 2004 because they'd spent the previous session on issues like gay marriage, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the liberal biases of college professors, all while the state faced a monumental fiscal crisis. As the Republican minority leader in the Colorado house said on National Public Radio after the 2004 election, "Our party has basically made the party platform 'guns, God, and gays,' and that wasn't a winning message."




How far and how fast might the current Democratic wave proceed in the West? Republicans don't expect to retake any ground in the region at either the congressional or gubernatorial level in this year's elections. In fact, they'll have their work cut out for them just holding on to governorships in Colorado and Nevada, where term limits will force incumbents out of office. And Republicans could lose two Senate seats in the West this year—Conrad Burns in Montana and Jon Kyl in Arizona are both facing serious challenges—as well as several House seats.

If it seems strange to picture the West losing its reddish cast, well, that's because it *is* strange. In many ways, the interior West represents the Republican Party's classic self-image: dedicated to rugged individualism and old-fashioned leave-me-alone conservatism. And it would seem logical that after so many years of wooing southern voters, the party might now recalibrate, and throw some love at those places and constituents who've been drifting slowly away from it. That may yet happen. But religious voters tend to be demanding. And party ideology carries a certain momentum that can be hard to reverse. In 2006 and 2008, the GOP will be working with Karl Rove's machinery, which is largely built to mobilize churchgoers and rile up socially conservative citizens.

If the political center of the GOP continues to drift southward, the party risks catalyzing another geographic realignment on a par with that which brought it to power—starting up in Montana and running south. Many of the West's mountains are already turning purple. They may yet turn blue.

*Ryan Sager is a columnist for the* New York Post. *This article is adapted from his forthcoming book,* The Elephant in the Room: Evangelicals, Libertarians, and the Battle to Control the Republican Party *(Wiley, September 2006).*

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU; BEING RIGHT IS NOT ENOUGH BY PAUL WALDMAN/2000 NATIONAL ANNENBERG ELECTION SURVEY





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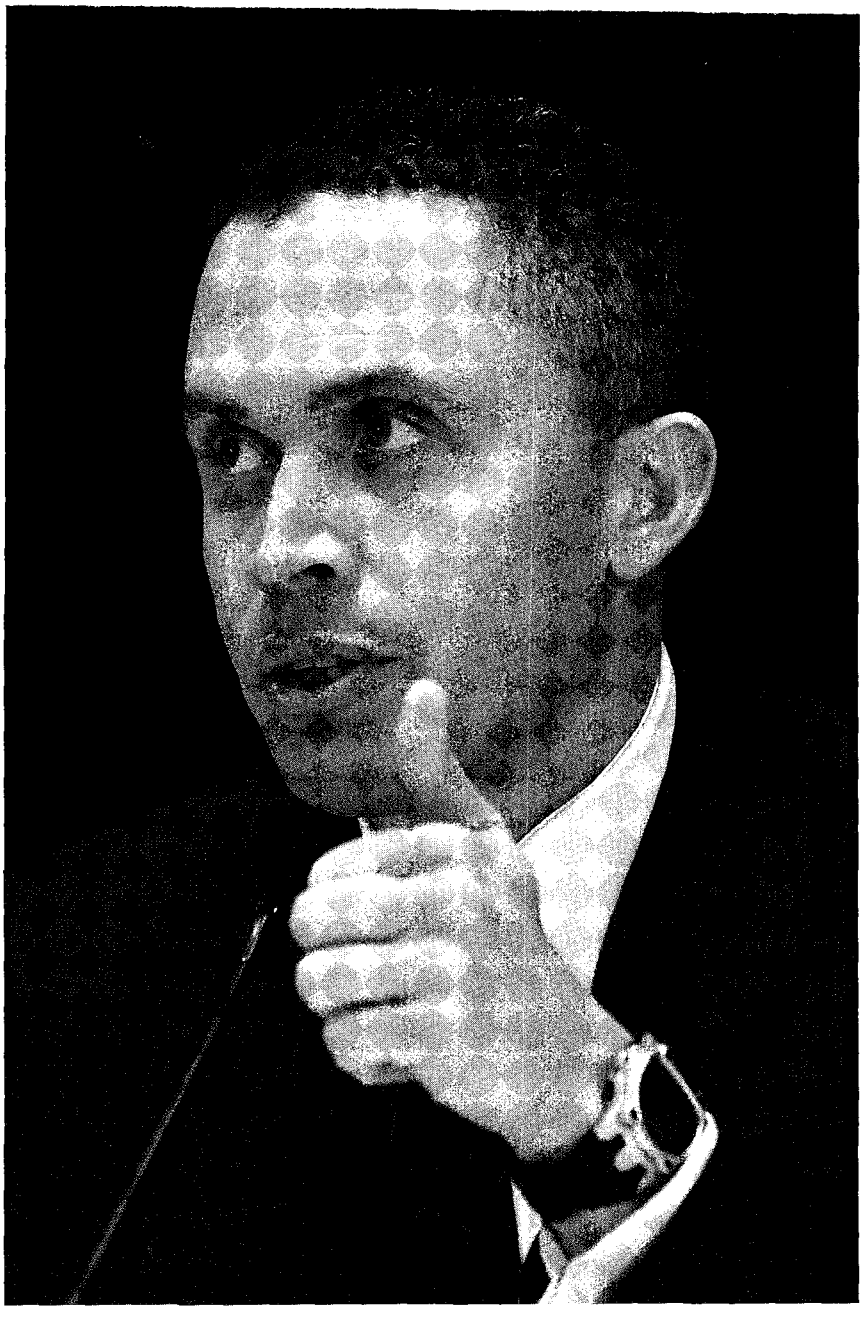

BRIEF LIVES

# Ford's Theater

*Can Harold Ford become the first black senator from the old Confederacy since Reconstruction?*

BY MICHAEL CROWLEY

On a recent spring morning, Harold Ford Jr. found himself in a minor traffic jam on a winding, hilly road in rural Robertson County, Tennessee. Up ahead, a truck was depositing a double-wide house at its new address on a grassy roadside patch. This is Bush territory—the president carried the county by 22 percent in 2004. Both culturally and geographically, it is a long way from Memphis, Ford's home and political base.

Ford was making a series of campaign stops that day. At the first, a YMCA, he tried to greet a burly middle-aged man in a clammy hallway. "Harold Ford, nice to see you!" he said. With a grunt, the man dropped his eyes, lowered his shoulder like a running back hitting an open hole, and marched onward. Ford sidled up to me and lowered his voice. "This is a *very* heavily Republican county," he said wearily.

The same goes for much of Tennessee, and Ford's weariness is understandable. He could hardly have more riding on his shoulders. To regain control of the Senate, Democrats need to pick up six seats on November 7. Given the GOP's malaise and the particulars of various races, a four- or five-seat Democratic pickup looks quite plausible. Getting over the hump and retaking the Senate, however, will be a mightier challenge—and Ford's could be the make-or-break race. "I think if there's a really, really big night for the Democrats, Tennessee is the key state," says Charlie Cook, editor of the nonpartisan *Cook Political Report*. "If Republicans can hold Tennessee, they hold on to the Senate. And if Democrats can win Tennessee, they win the Senate."

For Ford, the stakes are more personal. Should he win, he will become the first African-American senator from the old Confederacy since Reconstruction. He will also take a grand step toward fulfilling the sky-high expectations that greeted him when he arrived in Congress a decade ago—expectations that, by some accounts, he has yet to match. Ford's candidacy is a kind of daredevil stunt. If he pulls it off, he'll be showered in glory as a Democrat—a *black* Democrat, no less—who, at the still-tender age of thirty-six, managed to pick the red-state lock. But by running for the Senate, Ford is surrendering a House seat that he could likely have kept for a long, comfortable Washington career. And should he lose, one of the most extravagantly hyped political careers of the past decade could grind to a halt.

As Ford stumped in Robertson County, it was often hard to tell which party he calls home. In speeches about the budget deficit, gas prices, and chaos in Iraq, Ford avoided party labels. He rarely mentioned George W. Bush's name—and when he did, it was usually to criticize Bush from the right. Meeting with firefighters, Ford complained that Bush's immigration plan was, in effect, too *liberal* because it offers "amnesty"

MARK HUMPHREY/AP



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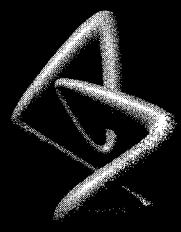
## What Does This Stand For?



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to illegal aliens. Speaking before YMCA board members, he bragged that he has never voted for an unbalanced budget. And when a high-school student asked him about gay marriage, Ford didn't hesitate: "I grew up in a way where guys don't get married. I'm just not into that," he said.

At times, Ford sounded like a third-party, pox-on-both-houses populist. "I see it in Washington every day. All those big jokers talking, and nothing happens," he vented to the firefighters. "You've got a bunch of cowards in Congress." Had Ross Perot inhabited the body of a young black man?

Of course, this approach may be Ford's only hope for winning a Senate seat in Tennessee. Although Democrats were competitive in this state not too long ago—Bill Clinton carried it twice, and Democrats held both Senate seats in the early 1990s—in the past decade or so, Tennessee has turned against them in federal elections. In 2000, Al Gore suffered the rare humiliation of losing his home state. Tennessee has become a case study in the migration to the GOP of southern voters who feel alienated from Democrats over "values" issues like guns, abortion, and gay rights.

Yet these are grim days for Republicans, even in the South. An April 2006 SurveyUSA poll showed Bush's Tennessee approval rating at an anemic 42 percent. Local factors are on Ford's side, too. Three Republicans—none considered terribly formidable—are currently fighting out a Senate primary likely to leave the winner bloodied and impoverished. According to Cook, this may be the best chance since the 1980s for a Democrat to win a Senate seat in Tennessee. But here's the problem: this may be the worst time in Tennessee politics to be named "Ford."

Ford followed a gilded path into politics. His father, Harold Ford Sr., was a liberal Memphis congressman for twenty-two years. When his father retired in 1996, "Junior," as he's often called, ran for his dad's seat and won. He was just twenty-six, but he was primed for great things. "I have been training for this since I was a kid," he would say. Ford had grown up in Washington, where he attended the elite St. Albans School, and then went on to the University of Pennsylvania. Months after his graduation from University of Michigan Law School, Ford was in Congress. Washington received him as an heir to Bill Clinton's then-ascendant brand of Democratic centrism—Ford had broken sharply with his father's liberalism—and the Capitol buzzed over his Clintonian ability to charm voters and the press. His arrival was celebrated in a long *New York Times Magazine* profile that placed him on the national political map.

His House career, however, has been less charmed. Some Democrats say Ford has been a disappointment, a political climber less interested (and less distinguished) in legislative accomplishment than in cultivating his own image. Some of his star turns have irritated fellow Democrats. Ford won the prized slot as keynote speaker at the 2000 Democratic convention—the very slot that would make Barack Obama so famous four years later. But Gore campaign aides disliked his speech and, after finding him obstinate about changing it, bumped him out of prime time. "It's about lack of discipline," says a Democratic operative who has worked with Ford, noting that he is famously late to meetings, or absent altogether. Thus some were put off when Ford mounted an audacious 2002 bid for House Democratic leader. Ford presented himself as a pro–Iraq War, centrist alternative to the liberal Nancy Pelosi, but he was crushed, by a 177–29 vote.

Yet all presumably will be forgiven if Ford wins come November. And that's the goal that he's been pursuing, with a startling single-mindedness, these many years. During his day in Robertson County, people routinely greeted him by saying, "I've seen you on television!"—a payoff from his intense courtship of the media, including conservative outlets like Fox News, where Ford has appeared more than forty times in the past five years. He's also a frequent guest of the cantankerous Don Imus (who is prone to saying things like "When my friend Harold Ford Jr. is elected president . . ."). Ford watchers call this part of a grander design. "Ford's been positioning himself to run for statewide office for quite a while," says Michael Nelson, a political-science professor at Rhodes College in Memphis. "Although he represents a district that is majority black, he's been doing his best to appear on [shows] that moderate-to-conservative voters tune in to."

Likewise, by most accounts Ford never really believed he could beat Pelosi—his goals were publicity and ideological positioning. If that's true, the gambit worked. Tennessee newspapers called his bid "gutsy," a display of "moxie." In case anyone missed the point, Ford even hugged a then-popular George Bush on national television after last year's State of the Union address. "I love my president," he said last summer. "I love him personally."

**How ironic it would be if Ford should find this chance at stardom—and redemption for his perceived failings—ruined by the family name that provided his political platform.**

Still, Ford faces a hard road to victory. Republicans are bashing him as a liberal elitist with expensive tastes, and polling suggests that his relentless appeals to conservatives have not entirely inoculated him against such charges.

Ultimately, however, the largest threat to Ford's campaign may be something that no amount of advance planning could have changed: his last name. A history of alleged corruption runs through the Ford clan. In 1987, Ford's father was indicted on bank-fraud charges (he was later acquitted). His uncle Emmitt, a former state representative, was indicted on insurance-fraud charges and resigned his seat in 1981. And the very day after Ford announced his Senate bid last May, his



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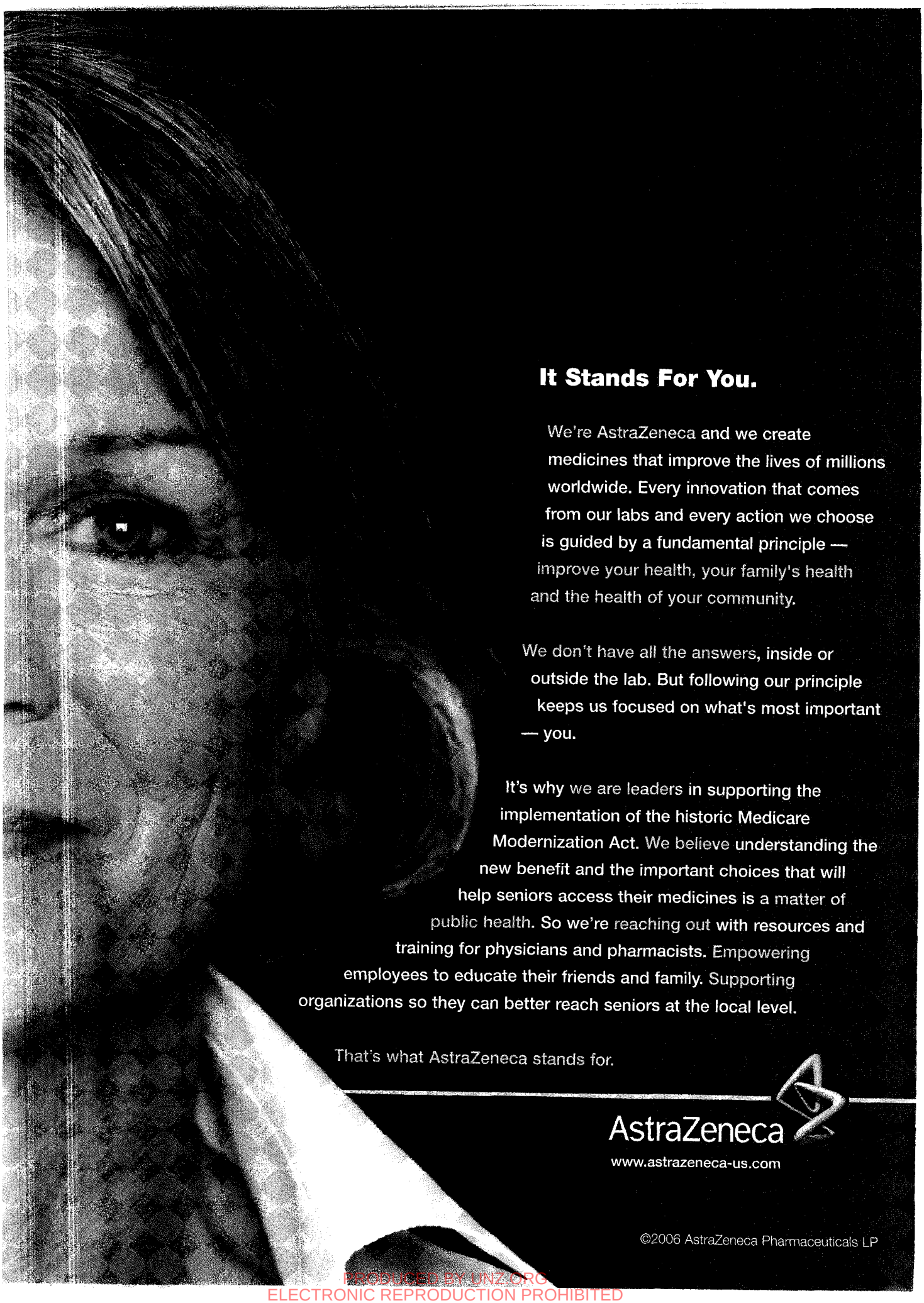


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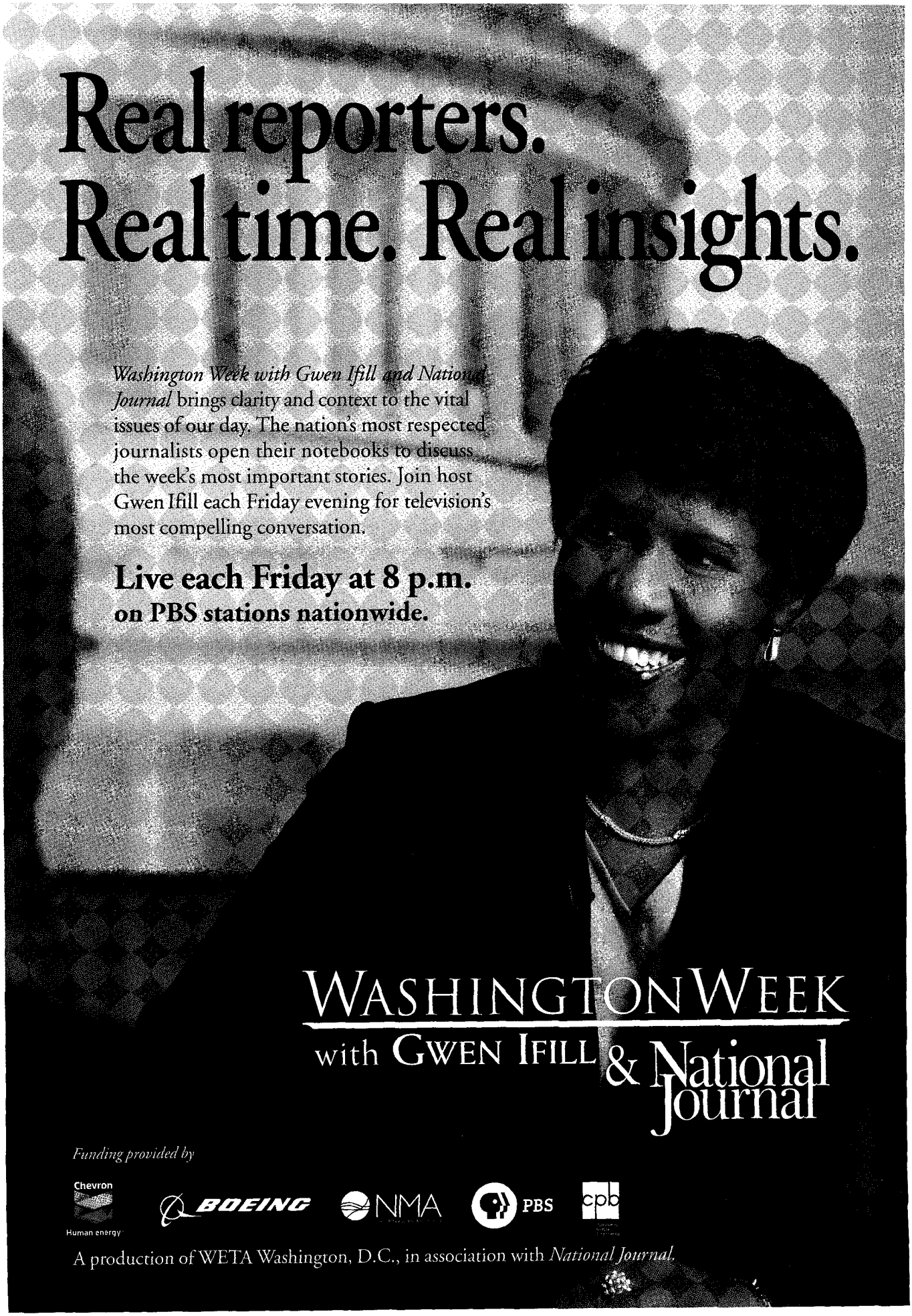


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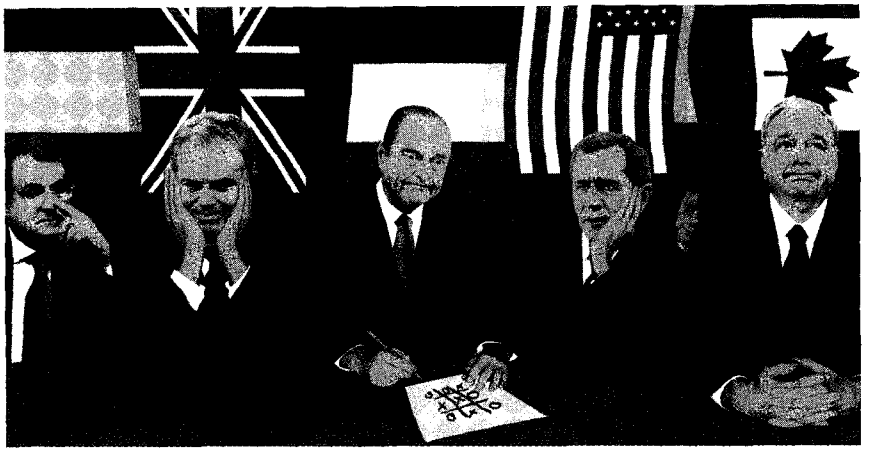
uncle John, a state senator, was indicted in a bribery sting.

"He wouldn't be a congressman today if his last name wasn't Ford. But the fact that his last name is Ford is going to make it significantly harder for him to be a senator from Tennessee," says John Ryder, a prominent Republican lawyer in Memphis. Ford aides protest that he has fifteen aunts and uncles and can't be held accountable for them. Still, says Rhodes College's Nelson, "everything we know about politics and how voters pay attention to politics makes it hard for me to believe he doesn't have a problem there." Nor does it help that John Ford's trial is scheduled for October. How ironic it would be if Harold Ford Jr. should find this chance at stardom—and redemption from his perceived failings—ruined by the family name that provided his political platform.

But nothing seems preordained in this race—or in politics more generally this year. At a firehouse in Robertson County, Ford found himself being grilled by Dustin Dudley, a firefighter watching from the back of the room. "If you get elected, I'm just wondering what you're gonna do that's really gonna make a difference at the state and the local level," said the man, with a skeptical smirk. Irritated by this challenge, Ford briefly grew testy. Did Dudley know, Ford asked, the difference between the House and the Senate? (He didn't.) Could he name Tennessee's senators? (No.) "You're coming back at me a little bit, I'm gonna come back at you!" Ford snapped. But then Ford pivoted and began trying to win the man over, arguing that Dudley's Republican senators had not delivered results. Later, I asked Dudley what he made of Ford. "Usually I vote Republican," he drawled. But this year would probably be different. "Everybody here pretty much seemed to have a good opinion of him; he pretty much won over the crowd, so to speak," he said. "I enjoyed the conversation and would look forward to seeing him here again if he gets back into office." In the end, Harold Ford's trip hadn't been a waste of time at all.

*Michael Crowley is a senior editor at* The New Republic.

JOHN RITTER



FIRST PRINCIPLES

# A Confederacy of Eunuchs

*What a lousy time for the leaders of the world's economic powerhouses to be gripped by political weakness*

BY CLIVE CROOK

Saint Petersburg was chosen to host this year's Group of Eight economic summit, the annual summer gathering of leaders of the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United Kingdom. The selection of a Russian venue was all too apt. Vladimir Putin's government is overweening, dysfunctional, and increasingly at odds with the Bush administration. The two leaders agree on very little just now, whether it is the world economy or anything else. And though Putin would stand out if this were a straightforward bad-government competition, none of the other heads of state has much to boast about, least of all George W. Bush. Has there ever been a summit at which *all* of the leaders were so weak, so compromised, so unpopular, or so discredited?

Ordinarily, it wouldn't really matter. These summits are usually just glorified photo ops, where no real business is conducted—or needs to be. But just to make it all perfect, on this occasion purposeful cooperation on economic policy is actually needed. The world economy's chief ailment these days is the huge imbalance in trade and finance between the United States on one side, importing vastly more than it is exporting and borrowing to make up the difference; and the trade-surplus, capital-exporting countries on the other side: China, Japan, the big oil exporters, parts of the European Union.

Fluctuating imbalances of this kind are business as usual, needless to say, and no problem at all in principle. The issue now is the scale, which is unprecedented. America's current-account deficit was $800 billion last year. Its foreign debt stands at roughly 25 percent of the gross domestic product, and it's growing—ten years ago the figure was 6 percent. Much of the money flowing in to finance that deficit has come from China's government, which buys U.S. Treasury bills and puts them in its central bank. Those Chinese reserves now stand at some $900 billion—by historical standards, a remarkable number.

The foreign appetite for American financial assets is not unlimited. At some point this imbalance will therefore be reduced, either by financial markets at their own initiative (which might well be abrupt and brutal) or by deliberate changes in economic policy. Because this financial imbalance is international, it would be best addressed by an internationally coordinated remedy. The shape of that remedy is uncontroversial. America needs to cut its budget deficit (which fuels its need to borrow from overseas), China needs to let its currency rise against the dollar (which would be good for American exports),



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and the European Union and Japan need to grow faster (which would work to the same effect).

The summit, you might think, would be the appropriate place to work it all out. Invite China along, and reach an understanding. But then all of the leaders would have to go home and deliver. China, not a member of the G-8, could probably keep any commitments it entered into (sometimes it helps to be undemocratic). But could the others?

Wherever you look, you see weak governments. With midterm elections approaching, Bush's standing with American voters keeps testing new lows. Republicans contemplate November with mounting dread. Junichiro Koizumi should be doing well, you might think, since Japan's long-flattened economy is finally reviving—but no, Koizumi's Liberal Democratic Party lost a recent by-election. The prime minister is due to step down as leader of his party in September.

Tony Blair is about as unpopular in Britain as Bush is here, and for much the same reason (Iraq). His Labour Party used to do what he told it to. No longer; it squirms to be rid of the man. His successor, Gordon Brown, has been all but anointed.

Stephen Harper, meanwhile, leads the weakest minority government Canada has ever seen; his party commanded barely a third of the votes cast in this year's election. Germany's Angela Merkel commands an even more unruly left-right coalition. Jacques Chirac's government has just capitulated to rioters and withdrawn a comically timid first effort at reform of France's labor rules. Winding up the parade of ineffectuality, in Italy, is Romano Prodi, who scraped out a disputed victory in April's election and will lead a coalition of mainstream leftists, communists, ex-communists, and assorted radicals. His tainted predecessor, Silvio Berlusconi, is rarely right about anything, but is probably correct in his assessment of the Prodi government's prospects: "I think theirs will be a parenthesis, an interruption."

So there you have the cast for Saint Petersburg. Aside from Putin, who looks ever more like an autocrat, and with apologies to Merkel for the metaphor, the G-8 is a confederacy of political eunuchs.

All of the governments involved understand the argument for coordinated action. The imbalances have been created at least partly by a mismatch of policies—notably, the overborrowing by America's government, China's increasingly irrational zeal to maintain an overly competitive currency, and the failure in so much of Europe to undertake the economic reforms (such as the intended loosening of labor rules in France) that would lower unemployment and spur growth.

The changes in policy needed to restore international balance are desirable for domestic reasons, in any case. Federal overborrowing would hurt Americans in the end even if the international imbalances were not getting out of hand; a stronger renminbi would help American exports, but it would be good for China's consumers too; Europe, presumably, would prefer lower unemployment and faster growth.

But since these issues are internationally linked, and at the moment to an unusual degree, there is an unusually sweet opportunity to devise an approach that recognizes and exploits the connections. For instance, a smaller American budget deficit would reduce demand in the economy. This contractionary effect could be offset by a coordinated rise in China's currency and pro-growth economic reform in Europe.

**At some point the global financial imbalance will be reduced, either by financial markets (which might be abrupt and brutal) or by changes in policy.**

Unfortunately, seeing a need to act and being able to act—especially in unison—are two different things. The policies required by each country must be passed by domestic legislatures and (even in China's case) sold to domestic interests. Used intelligently, a G-8-wide or broader agreement could ease that political burden. It could tell the world, "We're all in this together, each of us playing a part." The imprimatur of an international resolution and the perception of foreign "concessions" can be useful crutches for political action.

The leaders who will gather in Saint Petersburg seem to understand this too. In April their finance ministers and central-bank governors agreed to a new mandate for the International Monetary Fund, asking it to study the imbalance (as if it had not already been doing so: the fund issued strong warnings about all of this four years ago) and publish recommendations for an internationally coordinated approach to resolving it.

Up to a point, this is encouraging. But the IMF has no power to force these governments to act. They are not borrowing from the IMF, unlike the small, poor, near-bankrupt countries that it is accustomed to supervising. It has no leverage except persuasion—and if it has a care for its own continued existence, it had better use even that with extreme circumspection. (What would Congress make of the IMF's appearing to dictate American fiscal policy?)

The IMF might serve as a useful prod, but real leadership—starting with strong public statements of support and commitment—must come from the crippled heads of state in Saint Petersburg. Unfortunately, the politics of weakness often tugs in another, less productive direction—especially before a crisis actually boils over. It will be tempting for these leaders to say, "This problem is mainly China's fault, and Europe's fault. The IMF should force them to act." Blaming foreigners is a time-tested political strategy. If that strategy is invoked, the IMF, the summit, or whatever mode of international cooperation is adopted may actually slow reforms further.

So here's the key question, which the summit will at least begin to answer: After all of the political and economic calculations have been done, what do enfeebled governments really see—an opportunity to act more effectively, or just somebody else to blame?

*Clive Crook is a senior editor of* The Atlantic.



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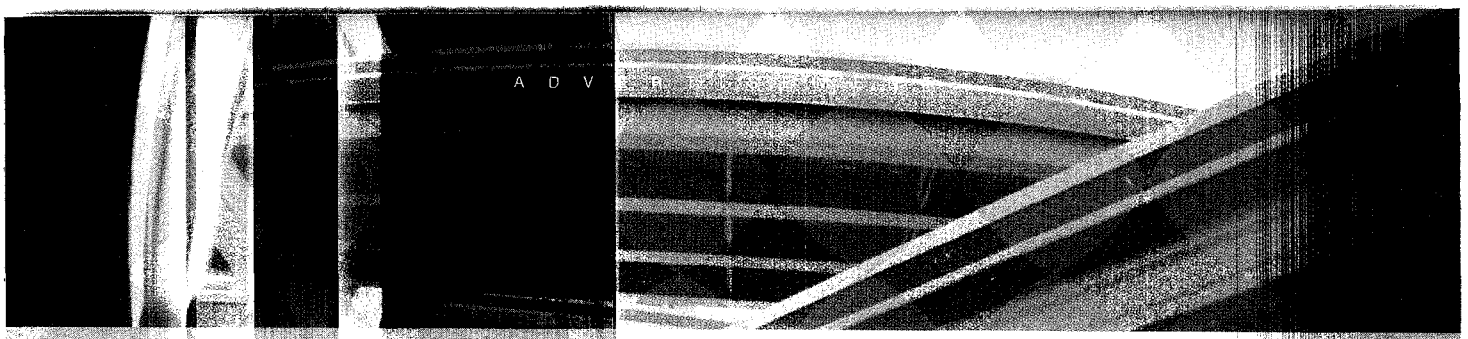

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THE LAW

# Of Clerks and Perks

*Why Supreme Court justices have more free time than ever—and why it should be taken away*

BY STUART TAYLOR JR. AND BENJAMIN WITTES

JOHN RITTER

There are few jobs as powerful as that of Supreme Court justice—and few jobs as cushy. Many powerful people don't have time for extracurricular traveling, speaking, and writing, let alone for three-month summer recesses. Yet the late Chief Justice William Rehnquist produced four popular books on legal themes while serving on the bench. Clarence Thomas has been working on a $1.5 million memoir. And Sandra Day O'Connor, who retired to general adulation, took twenty-eight paid trips in 2004 alone, and published books in 2002, 2003, and 2005.

All this freelancing time breeds high-handedness. Ruth Bader Ginsburg tars those who disagree with her enthusiasm for foreign law with the taint of apartheid and *Dred Scott*; Antonin Scalia calls believers in an evolving Constitution "idiots," and carries on a public feud with a newspaper over whether a dismissive gesture he made after Sunday Mass—flicking fingers out from under his chin—was obscene. Meanwhile, on the bench the justices behave like a continuing constitutional convention, second-guessing elected officials on issues from school discipline to the outcome of the 2000 election, while leaving unresolved important, if dust-dry, legal questions that are largely invisible to the public.

Many lawmakers are keen to push back against a self-regarding Supreme Court, but all of the obvious levers at their disposal involve serious assaults on judicial independence—a cure that's worse than the disease of judicial unaccountability. The Senate has already politicized the confirmation process beyond redemption, and attacking the federal courts' jurisdiction, impeaching judges, and squeezing judicial budgets are all bludgeons that legislators have historically avoided, and for good reason.

So what's an exasperated Congress to do? We have a modest proposal: let's fire their clerks.

Eliminating the law clerks would force the justices to focus more on legal analysis and, we can hope, less on their own policy agendas. It would leave them little time for silly speeches. It would make them more "independent" than they really want to be, by ending their debilitating reliance on twentysomething law-school graduates. Perhaps best of all, it would effectively shorten their tenure by forcing them to do their own work, making their jobs harder and inducing them to retire before power corrupts absolutely or decrepitude sets in.

No justice worth his or her salt should need a bunch of kids who have never (or barely) practiced law to draft opinions for him or her. Yet that is exactly what the Court now has—four clerks in each chamber to handle the lightest caseload in modern history. The justices—who, unlike lower-court judges, don't have to hear any case they don't wish to—have cut their number of full decisions by more than half, from over 160 in 1945 to about 80 today. During the same period they have *quadrupled* their retinue of clerks.

Because Supreme Court clerks generally follow a strict code of *omertà*, the individual justices' dependence on them is hard to document. But some have reportedly delegated a shocking amount of the actual opinion writing to their clerks.

Justice Harry Blackmun's papers show that, especially in his later years, clerks did most of the opinion writing and the justice often did little more than minor editing, as well as checking the accuracy of spelling and citations. Ginsburg, Thomas, and Anthony Kennedy reportedly have clerks write most or all of their first drafts—according to more or less detailed instructions—and often make few substantial changes. Some of O'Connor's clerks have suggested that she rarely touched clerk drafts; others say she sometimes did substantial rewrites, depending on the opinion.

There's no reason why seats on the highest court in the land, which will always offer their occupants great power and prestige, should also allow them to delegate the detailed writing to smart but unseasoned underlings. Any competent justice should be able to handle more than the current average of about nine majority opinions a year. And those who don't want to work hard ought to resign in favor of people who do.

Cutting the clerks out of the writing will also improve the justices' decision-making, by forcing them to think issues through. As the eighty-six-year-old John Paul Stevens, the only justice who habitually writes his own first drafts, once told the journalist Tony Mauro: "Part of the reason [I write my own drafts] is for self-discipline ... I don't really understand a case until I write it out."

This is not to suggest that the justices should have to spend their time on scut work—reading all 8,000 petitions for review filed in a typical year, or hitting the library to dig up obscure precedents. These are the tasks that law clerks used to do. And this sort of thing is all they will have time to do if Congress cuts each justice's clerk complement from four back to one, as legal historian David Garrow has suggested.

For much of American history, the life of a justice was something of a grind. Watching the strutting pomposity of modern justices, this "original understanding" of the job—as a grueling immersion in cases, briefs, and scholarship—seems increasingly attractive.

Justice Louis Brandeis once said that the reason for the Supreme Court justices' relatively high prestige was that "they are almost the only people in Washington who do their own work." That was true then. It should be true again.

*Stuart Taylor Jr. is a* National Journal *columnist and* Newsweek *contributor. Benjamin Wittes is an editorial writer at* The Washington Post.



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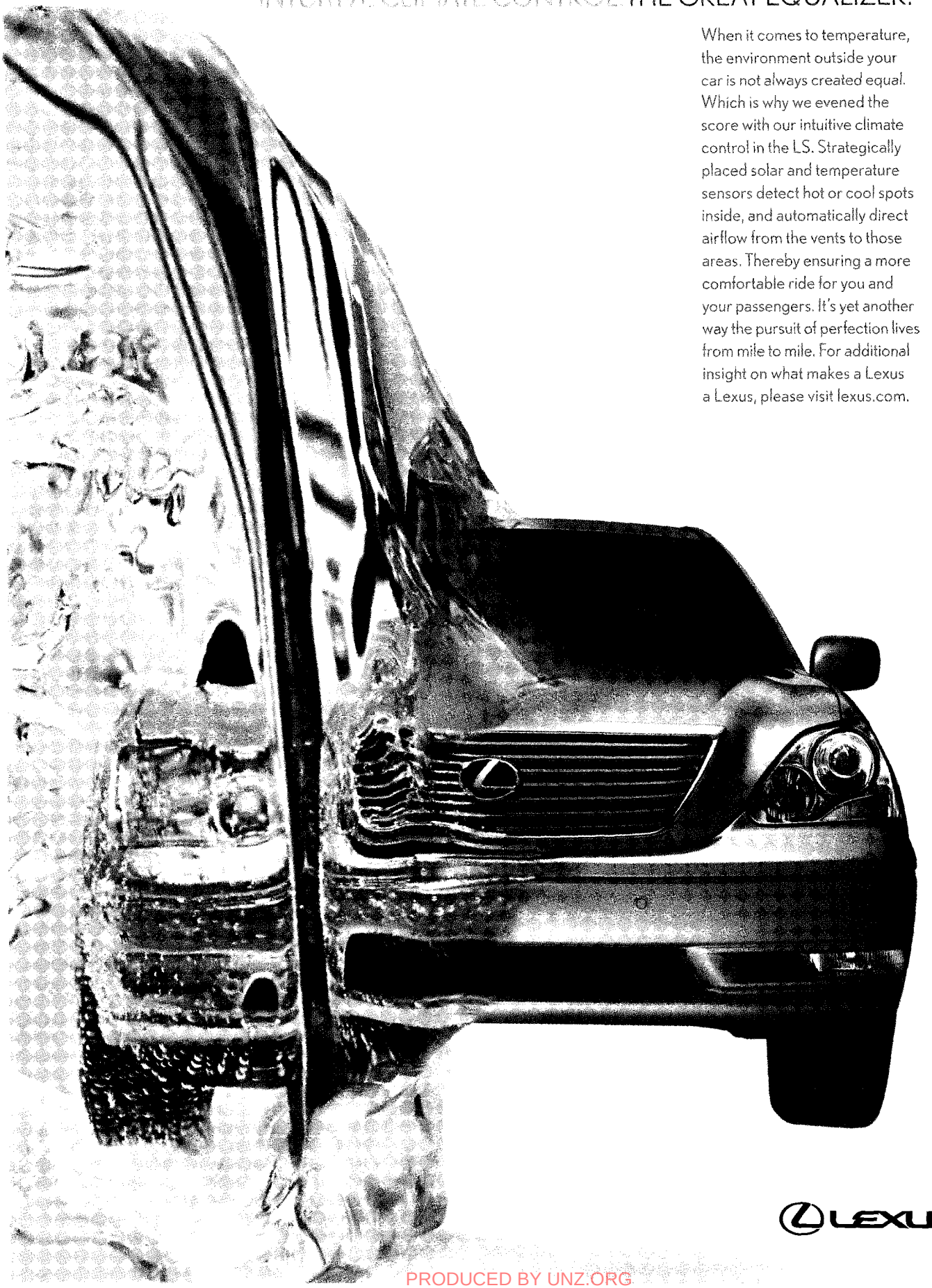

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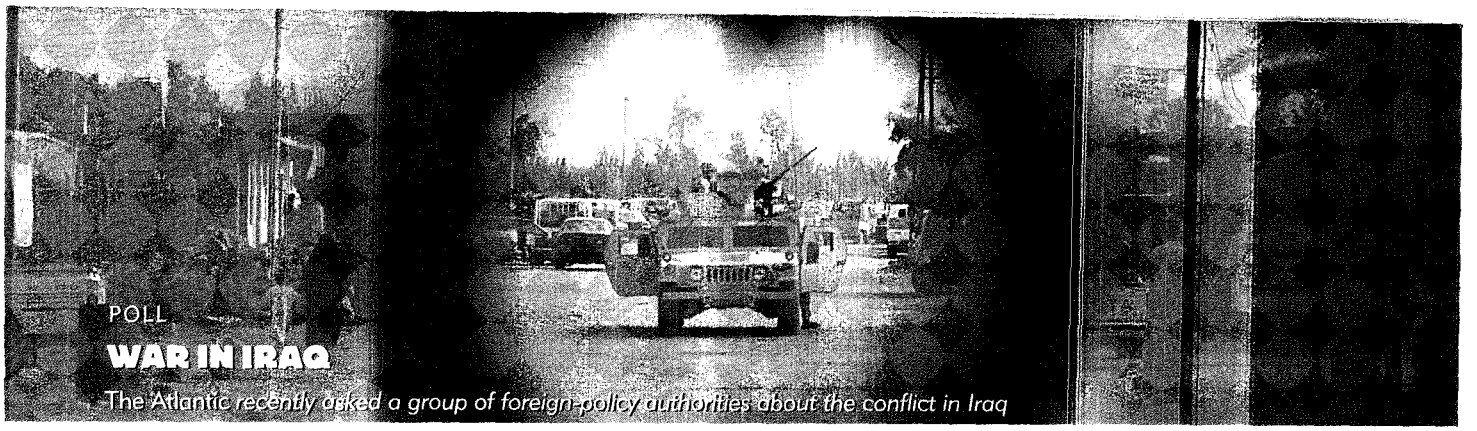

POLL

# WAR IN IRAQ

*The Atlantic recently asked a group of foreign-policy authorities about the conflict in Iraq*

## Q: What would be best for Iraq's security and stability over the next two years?

**58%: Significantly fewer troops than we have in Iraq today, and less daily interaction with Iraqis**

"We need to demonstrate that we will not be a participant in an Iraqi civil war. As long as Iraqi political leaders believe that we will support them at all costs, they will not make the hard political choices that just might provide [a] political solution to the civil war that has already begun."

"Unfortunately, the time for 'significantly more U.S. troops' has come and gone, both there and here. We sure should have stabilized the country and quelled the insurgency before handing off to a callow, inexperienced, cobbled-together Iraqi government."

**26%: Significantly more U.S. troops than we have in Iraq today, with a stronger daily presence in Iraq's population centers**

"The basic condition for successful governance in Iraq—security—is still absent. More U.S. ground forces are needed to secure and hold pacified areas, train Iraqi soldiers over a longer time horizon (at least five years), and seal the borders. More troops are also needed as tensions with Iran increase. U.S. troops may be needed to put down Iran-sponsored militias. More U.S. troops could avert a full-fledged civil war."

"We need a significant increase in the troop level; however, it needs to be from the international community and from the newly formed and trained Iraqi army."

**16%: About the same U.S. troop levels and visibility as today**

"The political will does not exist to increase the number of U.S. troops in Iraq, and the U.S. military would be hard pressed to sustain a larger presence even if it did. Iraqis will read any unilateral U.S. decision to dramatically reduce the number of U.S. troops as a sign they are being abandoned to the wolves, thereby persuading militias to accelerate their plans to go to the mattresses."

"If we do not shift responsibility to the Iraqis, they will not take it—and they will blame us for continued division and violence."

## Q: Do you think it is likely that the sectarian violence in Iraq will turn into a sustained, all-out civil war within the next two years?

**51%: No**

"Today's violence is more like gangs struggling over disputed turf than civil war. Each side is sufficiently strong to largely protect [its] clansmen, and not strong enough to mount organized war against [its] opponents. It is likely to stay like this for some time."

"Chronic violence, yes, but we'd be better off calling it 'sectarian violence' or 'communal violence' rather than 'civil war,' which conjures up, to Americans, visions of Sherman's march through Georgia. In Iraq the Kurds have what they want in the north, the Shia what they want in the south. Ultimately, I suspect the Sunnis will get generous autonomy in the provinces in which they predominate, and the only question will be the sorting out of Baghdad, where you will probably see segregation along the lines of Beirut. It will be ugly and violent, but I don't think it will be utter chaos."

"Once (and if) we get out of the way there will be a spike in violence, but leaders on both sides understand that they can't win an all-out civil war—and so will have an incentive to find some modus vivendi."

**49%: Yes**

"Yes, but only in the center of the country. I think it's doubtful that the violence will spill into Kurdistan or become an all-out civil war in the south."

"The security situation hinges on whether Shiites, Kurds, and Sunnis agree on provisions for developing the oil sector and sharing oil wealth. The constitution as written gives provincial law on energy issues precedence over federal law, ensuring that Sunni areas will not benefit. If the legal framework for oil and revenue sharing is not changed, Sunnis will have no reason to buy into an Iraqi state, [and] the insurgency will turn into civil war."

"We continue to underestimate the dysfunctional nature and corruption of [Iraq's] political leaders [and] the depth of the insurgent groups. [We] fail to understand the insurgent penetration of the Iraqi security forces we are training and [the] Iranian interests in [Iraqi instability] as a warning to us as to what the future, both in Iraq and in the region, will hold if we move against them. The net result is that we will soon face [an undeniable] civil war."

JURE ERZEN/AVPN

**PARTICIPANTS (43):** *Kenneth Adelman, Graham Allison, Ronald Asmus, Samuel Berger, Daniel Blumenthal, Stephen Bosworth, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Daniel Byman, Richard Clarke, Eliot Cohen, Ivo Daalder, James Dobbins, Lawrence Eagleburger, Douglas Feith, Robert Gallucci, Jay Garner, Leslie Gelb, Marc Grossman, John Hamre, Gary Hart, Bruce Hoffman, Robert Hunter, Tony Judt, Robert Kagan, David Kay, Andrew Krepinevich, Charles Kupchan, Anthony Lake, John Lehman, James Lindsay, Jessica Mathews, William Nash, Samuel Nunn, Joseph Nye, Carlos Pascual, Thomas Pickering, Kenneth Pollack, Joseph Ralston, Susan Rice, Wendy Sherman, Anne-Marie Slaughter, James Steinberg, Anthony Zinni.*

*Not all participants answered every question.*



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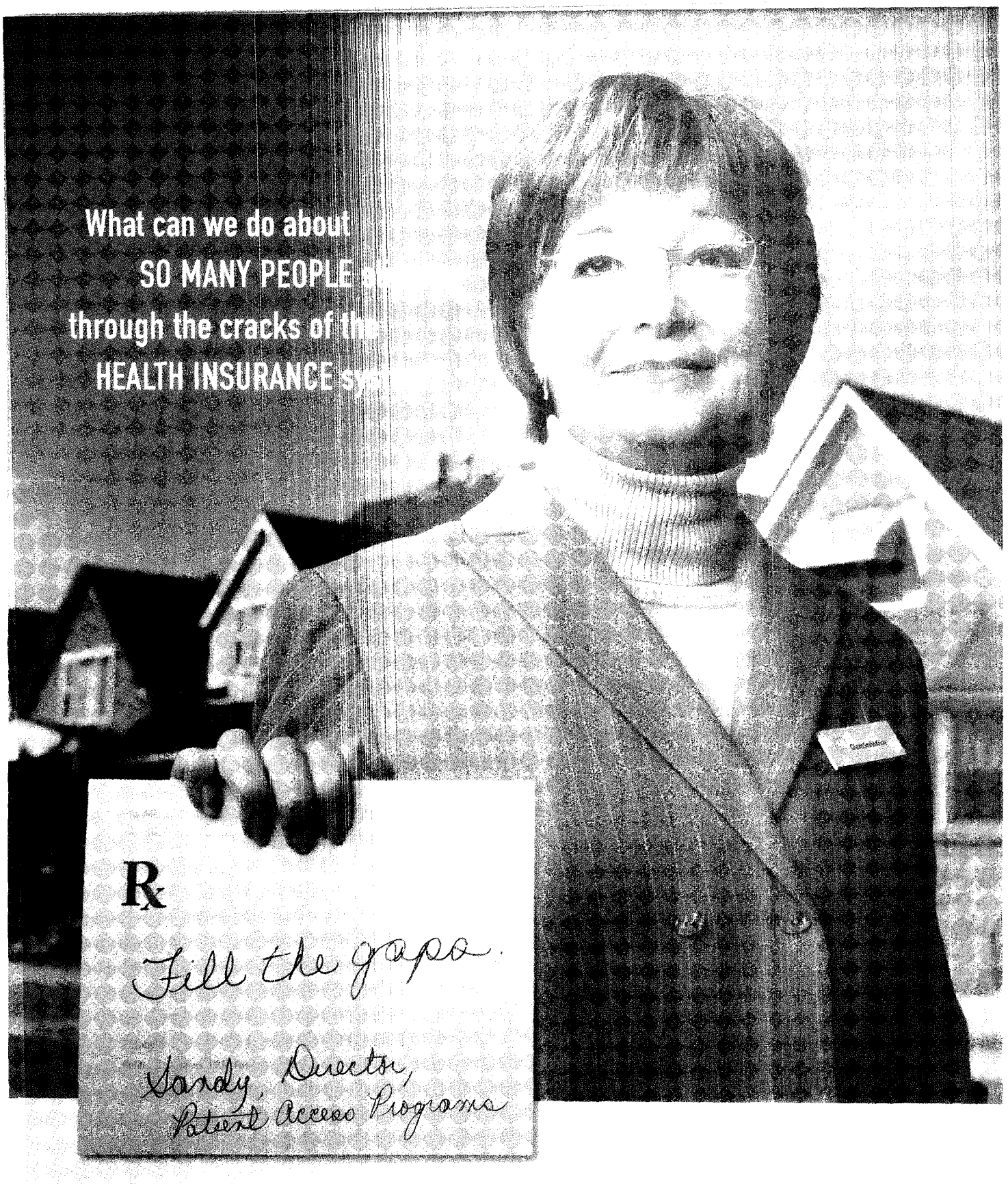


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# Primary Sources

*Pakistan's out-of-control army; the sorry (but egalitarian) state of American health care; the happiness census*

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## The Phantom Menace

"The risk of an Islamist takeover in Pakistan"—long a familiar worst-case scenario among foreign-policy experts—"is a myth," according to a new policy brief by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which argues that the Pakistani military has grossly exaggerated the threat of radical Islam in order to consolidate power at home and win foreign support for the regime. While there are several Islamist political parties and militant groups operating in the country, they are controlled by Pakistan's army, which has "always been able to maintain violence at an 'acceptable' level" by keeping Islamist groups divided and "generating infighting every time an organization became too important." (And when Islamist groups have taken part in national elections, they have never won more than 12 percent of the vote, and have usually garnered somewhere between 5 percent and 8 percent.) The real threat to security in the region, the report concludes, is the near-absolute rule of the Pakistani military and its hostility to democratic reform. The military enjoys an enormous presence throughout the country, with 550,000 soldiers (nearly 50,000 more than the U.S. Army) and almost 1,000 generals, many of whom go on to play leadership roles at the country's universities, banks, and corporations after retirement. Much-needed reform of the military's role in Pakistani society will be impossible, the study's author argues, so long as the West continues to behave as if the nation and its nuclear weapons could fall into the hands of terrorists at any moment.

—"Pakistan: The Myth of an Islamist Peril," Frédéric Grare, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

SOCIETY

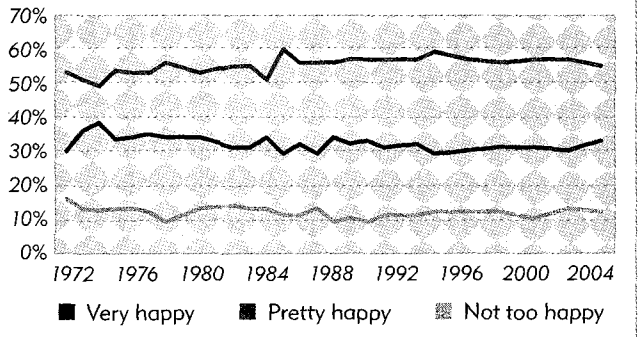
## The More Things Change ...

Presidents have come and gone and the Cold War has given way to the war on terror—but the rate of self-reported happiness in the United States has barely budged in thirty years, a new Pew Research Center report points out. Today, as in 1972, roughly 50 percent of Americans describe themselves as "pretty happy," just over 30 percent describe themselves as "very happy," and around 15 percent say that they're "not too happy." Nor have other trends in happiness changed much over the last three decades. Money bought happiness in 1972 at roughly the same rate it does now: rich people are more than twice as likely as people in the lowest income quartile to consider themselves "very happy," while those with incomes in the middle fall somewhere in between. (The fact that the rich are consistently happier than the poor, but that neither group has grown appreciably happier overall despite three decades of rising per capita income, suggests that being richer than your neighbor, rather than being well-off in absolute terms, makes all the difference.) Frequent churchgoers, Protestant and Catholic alike, are consistently happier than infrequent churchgoers; and the wedded are nearly twice as likely as the unwed to be "very happy." Other findings indicate that Hispanics and whites are slightly happier than blacks, that women and men describe themselves as happy in roughly equal numbers—and that "there is no significant happiness gap between dog owners and cat owners."

—"Are We Happy Yet?" Pew Research Center

**HAPPINESS IS A FLAT LINE**

*"Taken all together, how would you say things are these days: Would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?"*




MEDICINE

## Everybody Hurts

Black or white, rich or poor—it doesn't matter, we all get the same lousy medical care, a new study published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* suggests. The authors conducted interviews and obtained medical records from a random sample of 6,712 people in twelve metropolitan areas, and found that overall, participants in the study had received only 55 percent of the recommended medical care—defined as adherence to proper procedures in treating a variety of ailments—during their visits to health-care providers in the past two years. Well-off patients received better treatment than poor ones, but the differences weren't striking: patients who made more than $50,000 received 57 percent of the recommended care, and patients who made less than $15,000 a year received 53 percent. Black and Hispanic patients received 58 percent of the recommended care—slightly better than whites, who received 54 percent. These results, the authors note, are at odds with those of many other studies, which have shown that whites have a significant advantage over blacks. To explain this discrepancy, they suggest that earlier studies focused on "invasive and expensive procedures," in which whites do receive better treatment—though they add that this gap is narrowing as well.

—"Who Is at Greatest Risk for Receiving Poor-Quality Health Care?" Steven M. Asch et al., *The New England Journal of Medicine*

*For links to the documents discussed on this page, visit* www.theatlantic.com/doc/200607/primarysources.



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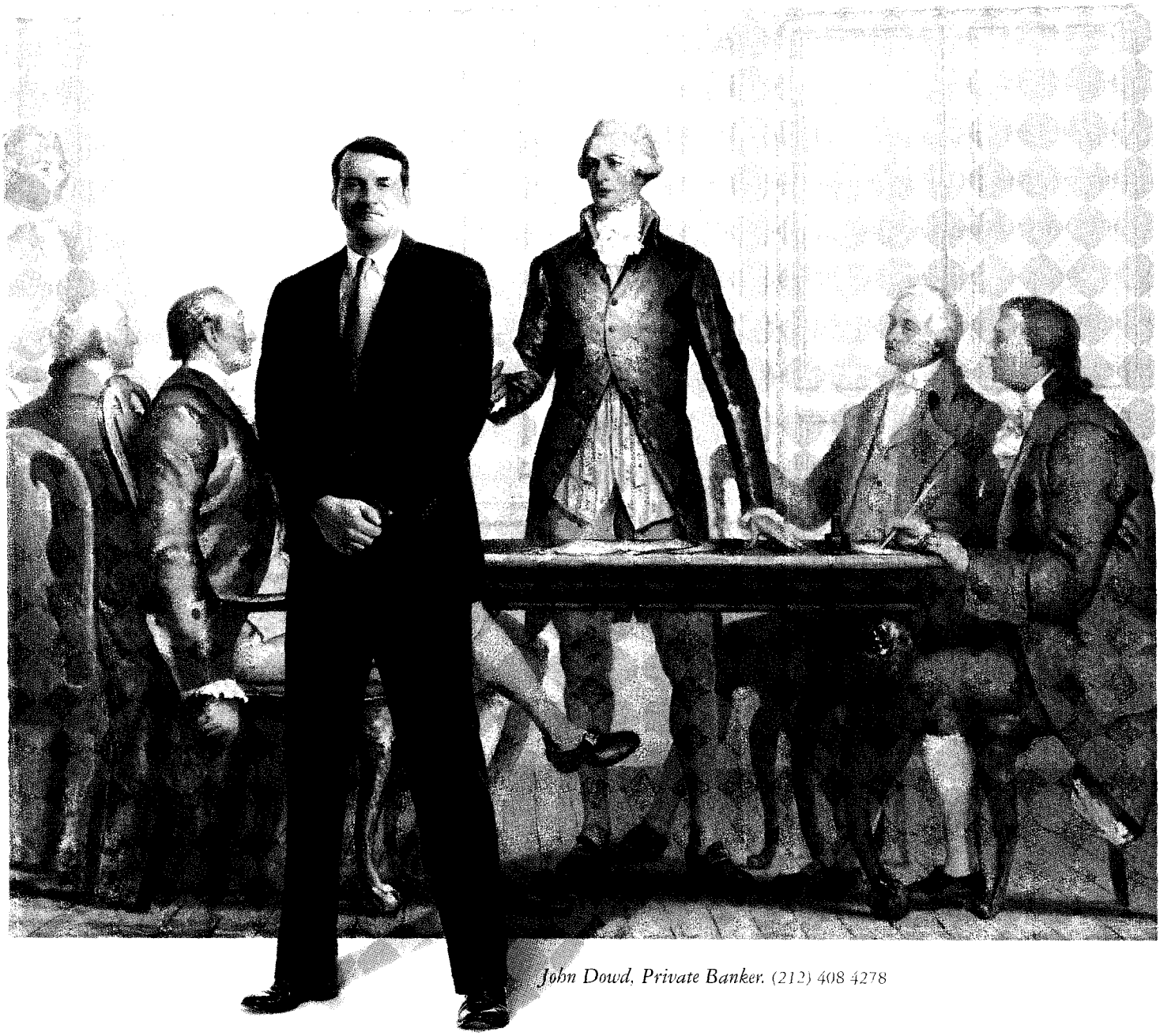

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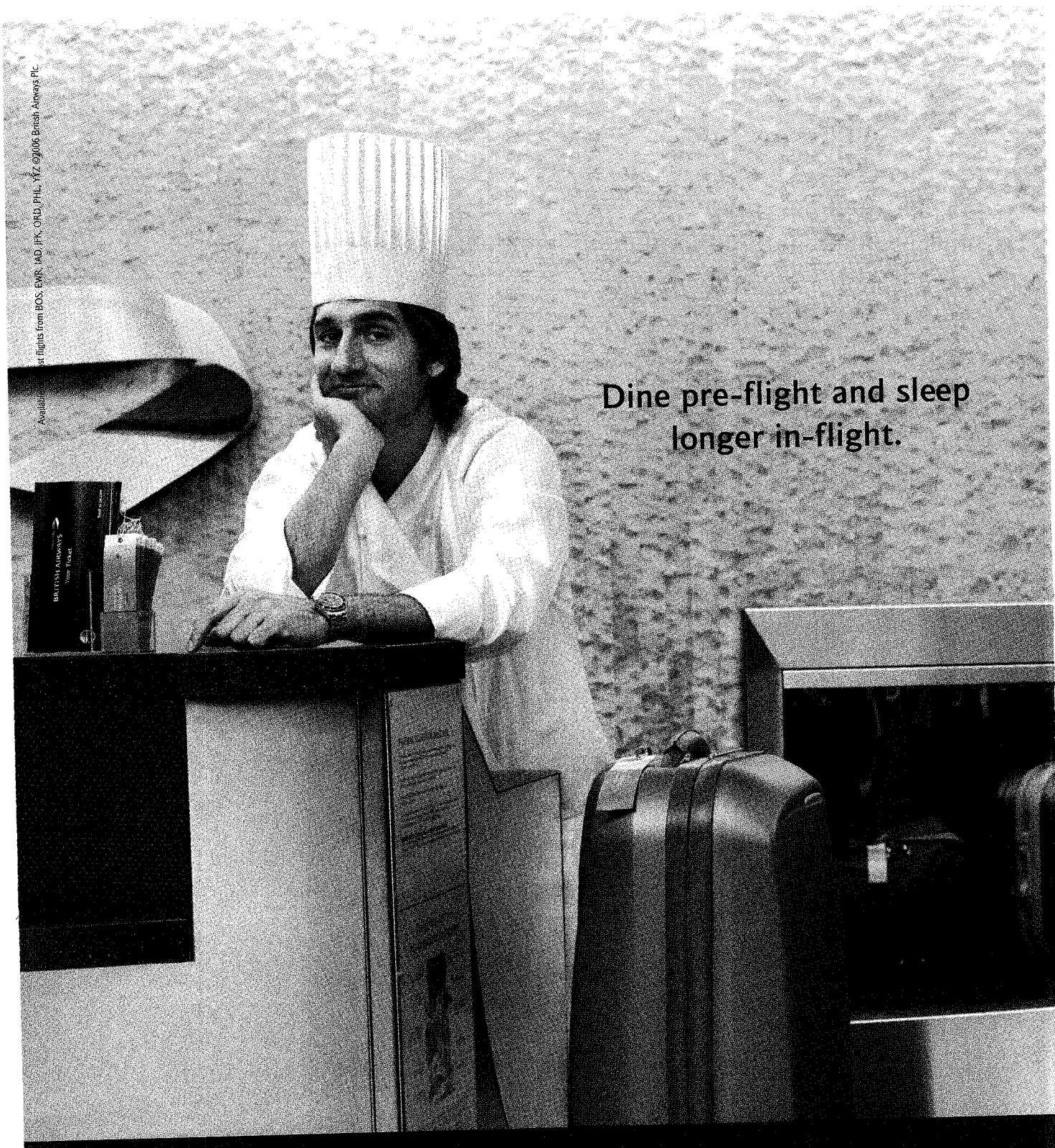


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# Idealism & Practicality

*This is the sixth in a series of archival excerpts in honor of the magazine's 150th anniversary. This installment is introduced by James Fallows, a national correspondent for* The Atlantic.

FROM THE START, a tension has been built into America's relations with the outside world—a tension between idealism and practicality.

The idealistic impulse was expressed long before there was an America, in John Winthrop's 1630 sermon about Boston's destined role as a "city upon a hill" with "the eyes of all people upon us." It grows from the assumption that America is a society different from all others, inventing a model of freedom, opportunity, and self-government toward which all others might aspire. America's duty is to help the rest of the world toward this goal, by example when possible and through force when necessary. America's responsibility to freedom-seeking people elsewhere rings through a statement as old as the Declaration of Independence and as recent as President George W. Bush's second inaugural address, with its reminder that "America's influence is considerable, and we will use it confidently in freedom's cause."

The practical impulse is based on the recognition that America is like all other nations in having territorial, economic, and military interests to defend, and limited (though large) resources with which to do so. It was expressed in the Constitution's careful limits on the power to make war, in George Washington's warning against "permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world," and in current recommendations that the country cut its losses in Iraq.

Neither impulse, in pure form, is sustainable as a policy. Strictly idealistic undertakings eventually become too costly—in money, lives, and other assets. Wholly expedient and self-interested strategies eventually offend America's self-image as a nobler exception among nations. Thus the story of American engagement with the world is the continual effort to find the right combination of idealism and practicality, and to readjust that balance almost as soon as it is set.

The eight essays collected here show the remarkable constancy of this tension through very different circumstances. More remarkable is that any of them can be read for its bearing on today's foreign-policy debates. The starkest contrast is between views expressed at opposite ends of the Cold War: Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.'s, in the early years, with a case for all-fronts American engagement with the world, versus Stanley Hoffman's, just before the end, with a reminder of what the United States cannot control. The most eerily timely may be an essay written more than seventy-five years ago: Reinhold Niebuhr's, on America's struggles as an imperialist power. —*JAMES FALLOWS*

*For the full text of these articles, visit www.theatlantic.com/ideastour.*

## THE GROWTH OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY

*March 1900*

BY RICHARD OLNEY

*Two years after the Spanish-American War left the United States for the first time in command of overseas territories (including Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines), former Secretary of State Richard Olney hailed the country's emergence as a world power, but warned against ill-considered expansion or excessive missionary zeal.*

Though historians will probably assign the abandonment of the isolation policy of the United States to the time when this country and Spain went to war over Cuba, and though the abandonment may have been precipitated by that contest, the change was inevitable, had been long preparing, and could not have been long delayed. The American people were fast opening their eyes to the fact that they were one of the foremost Powers of the earth and should play a commensurately great part in its affairs. Recognizing force to be the final arbiter between states as between individuals, and merit however conspicuous and well-founded in international law to be of small avail unless supported by adequate force, they were growing dissatisfied with an unreadiness for the use of their strength which made our representatives abroad less regarded than those of many a second or third class state, and left American lives and property in foreign countries comparatively defenseless . . .

The United States has come out of its shell and ceased to be a hermit among the nations, naturally and properly. What was not necessary and is certainly of the most doubtful expediency is that it should at the same time become a colonizing Power on an immense scale . . .

[No great power] can afford not to attend strictly to its own business and not to make the welfare of its own



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people its primary object—none can afford to regard itself as a sort of missionary nation charged with the rectification of errors and the redress of wrongs the world over. Were the United States to enter upon its new international role with the serious purpose of carrying out any such theory, it would not merely be laughed at but voted a nuisance by all other nations—and treated accordingly.

*Volume 85, No. 509, pp. 289–301*

## THE IDEALS OF AMERICA

*December 1902*

BY WOODROW WILSON

.....

*In 1902, future President Woodrow Wilson—then the president of Princeton University—enthusiastically welcomed "the century that shall see us a great power in the world."*

It took the war of 1812 to give us spirit and full consciousness and pride of station as a nation. That was the real war of independence for our political parties. It was then we cut our parties and our passions loose from politics over sea, and set ourselves to make a career which should be indeed our own. That accomplished, and our weak youth turned to callow manhood, we stretched our hand forth again to the west, set forth with a new zest and energy upon the western rivers and the rough trails that led across the mountains and down to the waters of the Mississippi. There lay a continent to be possessed ...

That rolling, resistless tide, incalculable in its strength, infinite in its variety, has made us what we are; has put the resources of a huge continent at our disposal; has provoked us to invention and given us mighty captains of industry. This great pressure of a people moving always to new frontiers, in search of new lands, new power, the full freedom of a virgin world, has ruled our course and formed our policies like a Fate. It gave us, not Louisiana alone, but Florida also. It forced war with Mexico upon us, and gave us the coasts of the Pacific. It swept Texas into the Union. It made far Alaska a territory of the United States. Who shall say where it will end? ...

The day of our isolation is past. We shall learn much ourselves now that we stand closer to other nations and compare ourselves first with one and again with another ...

It is by the widening of vision that nations, as men, grow and are made great. We need not fear the expanding scene. It was plain destiny that we should come to this, and if we have kept our ideals clear, unmarred, commanding through the great century and the moving scenes that made us a nation, we may keep them also through the century that shall see us a great power in the world. Let us put our leading characters at the front; let us pray that vision may come with power; let us ponder our duties like men of conscience and temper our ambitions like men who seek to serve, not to subdue, the world; let us lift our thoughts to the level of the great tasks that await us, and bring a great age in with the coming of our day of strength.

*Volume 90, No. 542, pp. 721–734*

## TRANS-NATIONAL AMERICA

*July 1916*

BY RANDOLPH S. BOURNE

.....

*As World War I unfolded in Europe and intensified ethnic antagonisms, native-born Americans became increasingly suspicious of the pockets of immigrant culture thriving among them. In 1916, the critic and essayist Randolph Bourne challenged such attitudes with an essay—now considered a classic of forward thinking—calling for a new, more cosmopolitan conception of America and a reconsideration of the "melting-pot" theory.*

No reverberatory effect of the great war has caused American public opinion more solicitude than the failure of the "melting-pot." The discovery of diverse nationalistic feelings among our great alien population has come to most people as an intense shock ...

The foreign cultures have not been melted down or run together, made into some homogeneous Americanism, but have remained distinct but cooperating to the greater glory and benefit, not only of themselves but of all the native "Americanism" around them.

The failure of the melting-pot, far from closing the great American democratic experiment, means that it has only just begun. Whatever American nationalism turns out to be, we see already that it will have a color richer and more exciting than our ideal has hitherto encompassed. In a world which has dreamed of internationalism, we find that we have all unawares been building up the first international nation ... What we have achieved has been ... a cosmopolitan federation of national colonies, of foreign cultures, from whom the sting of devastating competition has been removed. America is already the world-federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogeneous peoples under the sun. Nowhere else has such contiguity been anything but the breeder of misery. Here, notwithstanding our tragic failures of adjustment, the outlines are already too clear not to give us a new vision and a new orientation of the American mind in the world ...

America is coming to be, not a nationality but a transnationality, a weaving back and forth, with the other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors. Any movement which attempts to thwart this weaving, or to dye the fabric any one



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color, or disentangle the threads of the strands, is false to this cosmopolitan vision ...

The attempt to weave a wholly novel international nation out of our chaotic America will liberate and harmonize the creative power of all these peoples and give them the new spiritual citizenship, as so many individuals have already been given, of a world.

*Volume 118, No. 1, pp. 86–97*

## Awkward Imperialists

*May 1930*

BY REINHOLD NIEBUHR

.....

*Just over a decade after World War I, the theologian and public intellectual Reinhold Niebuhr warned of the pitfalls of America's rapid rise to power.*

Our empire was developed almost overnight. At the beginning of the World War we were still in debt to the world ... We wiped out our debt and put the world in our debt by well-nigh thirty billion dollars in little more than a decade, and we have increased our holdings in the outside world by one to two billion dollars per year ...

We are not prosperous because we are imperialists; we are imperialists because we are prosperous ...

We are a business people who know nothing about the intricacies of politics, especially international politics, and in the flush of youthful pride we make no calculations of the reactions to our attitudes in the minds of others.

Our lack of imagination is increased by the fact that we have come into our position of authority too suddenly to adjust ourselves to its responsibilities and that we are geographically too isolated from the world to come into intimate contact with the thought of others. It was only yesterday that we were a youthful nation, conscious of making an adventure in democratic government which the older nations did not quite approve, and we still imagine that it is our virtue rather than our power which the older nations envy ...

We hold ourselves aloof from international councils because we feel ourselves too powerful to be in need of counseling with others, but we are able to practise the deception of imagining that our superior political virtue rather than our superior economic strength makes such abstention possible and advisable ...

It has always been the habit of fortunate people to ascribe their luck or their fortune to their own moral qualities rather than to any inscrutability of history, and our fortune-favored nation has developed this habit with the greatest possible consistency ...

We still maintain the fiction that nothing but the love of peace actuates our foreign policy. A certain amount of hypocrisy which varies between honest self-deception and conscious dishonesty characterizes the life of every nation ...

We make simple moral judgments, remain unconscious of the self-interest which colors them, support them with an enthusiasm which derives from our waning but still influential evangelical piety, and are surprised that our contemporaries will not accept us as saviors of the world.

*Volume 145, No. 5, pp. 670–675*

## The New Isolationism

*May 1952*

BY ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER JR.

.....

*At the height of the Cold War, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., a Pulitzer Prize–winning Harvard history professor who would later go on to serve as an adviser to President Kennedy, warned against the resurgence of a long-standing—and in his view dangerous—aversion to American engagement with the outside world.*

Today we face a New Isolationism, bent upon what promises to be a fundamental attack on the foreign policy to which the United States and the free world are presently committed.

The internationalist euphoria of the past decade should not lead us to overlook the deep roots which isolationism has in the national consciousness. Americans have always had a natural and splendid exultation in the uniqueness of a new continent and a new society. The New World had been called into existence to redress the moral as well as the diplomatic balance of the Old; we could not defile the sacredness of our national mission by too careless intercourse with the world whose failure made our own necessary. Two great oceans fostered the sense of distance, emphasized the tremendous act of faith involved in emigration, and, at the same time, spared the new land the necessity for foreign involvements ...

How are the New Isolationists to get around the fact that their proposals are greeted with loud cheers in the Kremlin? ...

The triumph of [isolationism] could lead abroad only to an overflow of Soviet power into the regions from which we retreat—until we are forced back into the Western Hemispheres, or, what is more likely, until we perceive what we are doing and then, having invited Soviet expansion, strike back in the panic of total war ...

The words of the New Isolationism count less than the deeds; and the deeds shape up into a sinister pattern. The consolation is that this is probably a last convulsive outbreak of an old nostalgia. Once we have exorcised this latest version of isolationism, we may at last begin to live in the twentieth century.

*Volume 189, No. 5, pp. 34–38*



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## FOREIGN POLICY AND THE CRISIS MENTALITY

*January 1967*

BY GEORGE MCGOVERN

.....

*As the war in Vietnam escalated through the 1960s, contention over America's involvement in that conflict mounted at home. In 1967, an* Atlantic *essay by George McGovern—one of the war's most prominent and outspoken critics—decried what the senator saw as an unfortunate American tendency to make precipitate leaps into foreign entanglements "of uncertain significance."*

The thirteen colonies which leveled their muskets against the established order have evolved into the world's mightiest power in a highly dangerous nuclear age. This is a responsibility which demands a rare capacity to distinguish between fundamental forces at work around the globe and localized crises of uncertain significance.

But there is a disturbing American tendency to overreact to certain ideological and military factors while overlooking issues of vastly greater relevance to our safety and well-being. A civil insurrection in Santo Domingo or Vietnam is dramatic, but what is its significance compared with such quiet challenges as the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the surging of nationalism and social upheavals in the developing world, or the mounting crisis of hunger and population? What, too, is the relationship of the quality and strength of our own society to our position in the world? How will the world see us if we succeed in pacifying Vietnam but fail to pacify Chicago?

*Volume 219, No. 1, pp. 55–57*

## WHAT SHOULD WE DO IN THE WORLD?

*October 1989*

BY STANLEY HOFFMAN

.....

*A month before the Berlin Wall fell,* The Atlantic *published a consideration by the Harvard political-science professor Stanley Hoffman of what the easing of Cold War tensions would—and should—mean for the future of American foreign policy.*

In the world we have entered there will be many things that the United States can do nothing about. We should accept this state of affairs and, incidentally, perhaps even be grateful for it. It is a world in which war is no longer the principal and often inevitable mode of change; change comes more often now from domestic revolutions, about which we can and should do very little, because usually we do not understand the political cultures and trends of other countries and often we make mistakes. Change also, now that the pressures exerted by the Cold War are easing, comes from the rebirth of nationalisms. Many of the new forces of nationalism may lead to explosions and revolutions, about which, again, there will be very little that we or anybody else in the West can do. The task therefore is not to eliminate trouble everywhere in the world. Instead, we must devise what could be described as a new containment: not of the Soviet Union (although this will be part of it, insofar as conflicts of interest with the Soviets will continue) but of the various forms of violence and chaos that a world no longer dominated by the Cold War will entail. It is a complicated agenda, but it is at least different from the agenda we have had for so long.

*Volume 264, No. 4, pp. 84–96*

## BEYOND AMERICAN EMPIRE

*July/August 2003*

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

.....

*Three years ago,* Atlantic *correspondent Robert D. Kaplan characterized the United States as an empire at the height of its powers, and argued that in the not-so-distant future, it must relinquish its dominance to "a worthy successor."*

No doubt there are some who see an American empire as the natural order of things for all time. That is not a wise outlook. The task ahead for the United States has an end point, and in all probability the end point lies not beyond the conceptual horizon but in the middle distance—a few decades from now. For a limited period the United States has the power to write the terms for international society, in hopes that when the country's imperial hour has passed, new international institutions and stable regional powers will have begun to flourish, creating a kind of civil society for the world . . . There will be nothing approaching a true world government, but we may be able to nurture a loose set of global arrangements that have arisen organically among responsible and like-minded states.

If this era of reluctant imperium is to leave a lasting global mark, we must know what we are up to; we must have a sense that supremacy is bent toward a purpose and is not simply an end in itself. In many ways the few decades immediately ahead will be the trickiest ones that our policymakers have ever faced: they are charged with the job of running an empire that looks forward to its own obsolescence.

Winston Churchill saw in the United States a worthy successor to the British Empire, one that would carry on Britain's liberalizing mission. We cannot rest until something emerges that is just as estimable and concrete as what Churchill saw.

*Volume 292, No. 1, pp. 65–83*



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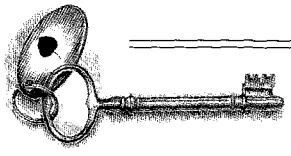

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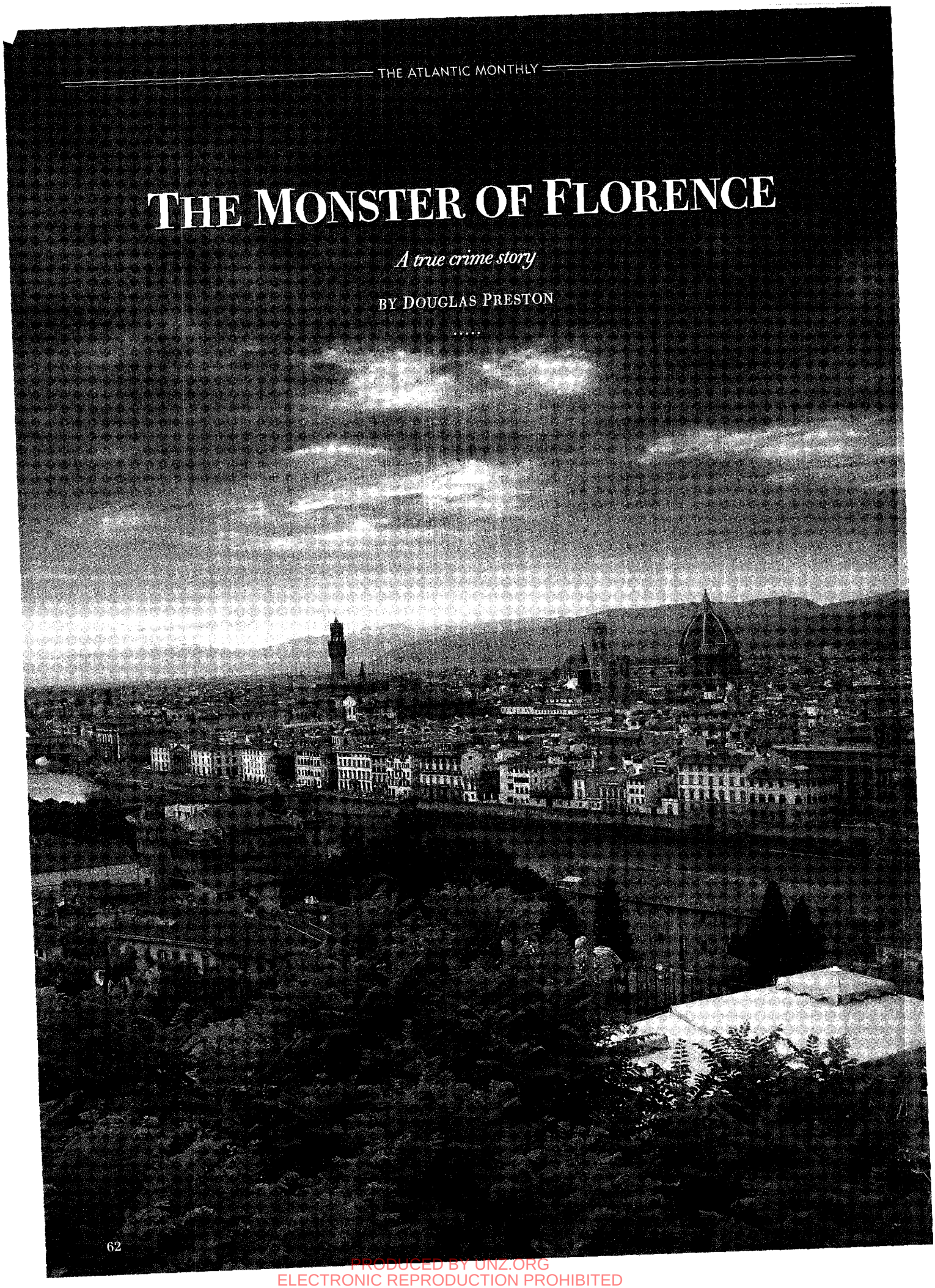
# THE MONSTER OF FLORENCE

*A true crime story*

BY DOUGLAS PRESTON





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My wife and I had always dreamed of living in Italy. Six years ago we finally made the move with our two young children. We rented a fourteenth-century farmhouse surrounded by olive groves and vineyards in the enchanting hills south of Florence. There were two famous landmarks near us: the villa La Sfacciata, once the home of Amerigo Vespucci, the Florentine explorer who gave America its name; and the villa I Collazzi, said to have been designed by Michelangelo, where Prince Charles painted many of his watercolors of the Tuscan landscape.

The olive grove beyond our front door boasted a third landmark, of sorts. It had been the site of one of the most horrific murders in Italian history, one of a string of double homicides committed by a serial killer known as "the Monster of Florence." As an author of murder mysteries, I was more curious than dismayed. I began researching the case. It didn't take me long to realize I'd stumbled across one of the most harrowing and remarkable stories in the annals of crime.

I contrived to introduce myself to the journalist who was the acknowledged expert on the case, a former crime correspondent for *La Nazione* named Mario Spezi. We met in Caffè Ricchi, in Piazza Santo Spirito, overlooking Brunelleschi's last and greatest church. Spezi was a journalist of the old school, with a handsome if cadaverous face, salt-and-pepper hair, and a Gauloise hanging from his lip. He wore a Bogart fedora and trench coat, and, knocking back one espresso after another, he told me the full story. As he spoke, he had his pocket notebook open on the table and he sketched his thoughts—I later learned it was a habit of his—the pencil cutting and darting across the paper, making arrows and circles and boxes and dotted lines, illustrating the intricate connections among the killings, the arrests, the suspects, the trials, and the many failed lines of investigation.

Between 1974 and 1985, seven couples—fourteen people in all—were murdered while making love in parked cars in the hills of Florence. The case was never solved, and it has become one of the longest and most expensive criminal investigations in Italian history. More than 100,000 men have been investigated and more than a dozen arrested, and scores of lives have been ruined by rumor and false accusations. There have been suicides, exhumations, poisonings, body parts sent by post, séances in graveyards, lawsuits, and prosecutorial vendettas. The investigation has been like a malignancy, spreading backward in time and outward in space, metastasizing to different cities and swelling into new investigations, with new judges, police, and prosecutors, more suspects, more arrests, and many more lives ruined.

It was an extraordinary story, and I would—to my sorrow—come to share Spezi's obsession with it. We became friends after that first meeting, and in the fall of 2000 we set off to find the truth. We believed we had identified the real killer. We interviewed him. But along the way we offended the wrong people, and our investigation took an unexpected turn. Spezi has just emerged from three weeks in prison, accused of complicity in the Monster of Florence killings. I have been accused of obstruction of justice, planting evidence, and being an accessory to murder. I can never return to Italy.

It all began one summer morning many years ago in the Florentine hills. The date was June 7, 1981, a Sunday. Mario Spezi, then thirty-five, was covering the crime desk at *La Nazione*, Florence's leading paper, when a call came in: a young couple had been found dead in a quiet lane in the hills south of town. Spezi, who lived in those same hills, hopped into his Citroën and drove like hell along back roads, arriving before the police.

He will never forget what he saw. The Tuscan countryside, dotted with olive groves and vineyards, lay under a sky of cobalt blue. A medieval castle, framed by cypress trees, crowned a nearby rise. The boy seemed to be sleeping in the driver's seat, his head leaning on the window. Only a little black mark on his temple, and the car window shattered by a bullet, indicated that it was a crime scene. The girl's body lay some feet behind the car, at the foot of a little embankment, amid scattered wildflowers. She had also been shot and was on her back, naked except for a gold chain, which had fallen between her lips. Her vagina had been removed with a knife.

"What shook me most of all," Spezi told me, "was the coldness of the scene. I'd seen many murder scenes before, and this wasn't like any of them." Everything was unnaturally composed, immobile, with no signs of struggle or confusion. It looked, he said, like a museum diorama.

Due to the sexual nature of the crime, it was assumed that the killer was a man. And yet the medical examiner's report noted that the killer had not sexually assaulted the woman. On the contrary, he had assiduously avoided touching her body, except to perform a mutilation so expert that the medical examiner speculated he might be a surgeon—or a butcher. The report also noted that the killer had used a peculiar knife with a special notch in it, probably a scuba knife.

Spezi's article caused a sensation: it revealed that a serial killer was stalking the countryside of Florence. In a sidebar, next to the article, *La Nazione* pointed to something the police had overlooked: this killing was similar to a double homicide that had taken place in the hills north of Florence in 1974. The article prompted the police to compare the shells recovered from both crimes. They discovered that the bullets had been fired by the same gun, a .22-caliber Beretta "long barrel" firing Winchester series "H" copper-jacketed rounds, which, according to ballistics experts, probably came from the same box of fifty. The gun had a defective firing pin that left an unmistakable mark on the rim of each shell.

The investigation that followed lifted the lid off a bizarre underworld, which few Florentines realized existed in the beautiful hills surrounding their city. Because most Italians live with their parents until they marry, sex in cars is a national pastime. At night, dozens of voyeurs prowled the hills spying on people making love in parked cars. Locally, these voyeurs

*Douglas Preston has published four nonfiction books and a dozen best-selling mystery novels, including* The Relic, Dance of Death, *and* The Book of the Dead*; the novels were co-authored with Lincoln Child. He is currently working on the English version of* Dolci Colline di Sangue.

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were called "*Indiani*," or Indians, because they crept around in the dark, some loaded down with sophisticated electronic equipment like suction-cup microphones and night-vision cameras. Following a quick investigation, the police arrested and jailed one of these *Indiani*.

A few months later the killer struck again, on a Saturday night with no moon, this time north of Florence, using the same Beretta and performing the same mutilation. This third double homicide panicked Florence and garnered front-page headlines across Italy.

Spezi worked nonstop for a month, filing fifty-seven articles. The excellent contacts he had developed among the police and the Carabinieri ensured he had the breaking news first. The circulation of *La Nazione* skyrocketed to the highest point in its history. Spezi wrote about one suspect, a priest, who frequented prostitutes for the thrill of shaving their pubic hair. He wrote about a psychic who spent a night in the cemetery where a victim was buried, sending and receiving messages from the dead. Spezi's articles became famous for their dry turns of phrase and that one wicked little detail that remained with readers long after their morning espresso. Florentines have a flair for conspiracy thinking, and the citizenry indulged in wild speculation. Spezi's articles were a counterpoint to the hysteria: understated and ironic in tone, they crushed one rumor after another and gently pointed the reader back to the actual evidence.

Late that November, Spezi received a journalistic prize for work he had done unrelated to the case. He was invited to Urbino to accept the prize, a kilo of the finest white Umbrian truffles. His editor allowed him to go only after he promised to file a story from Urbino. Not having anything new to write about, Spezi recounted the histories of some of the famous serial killers of the past, from Jack the Ripper to the Monster of Düsseldorf. He concluded by saying that Florence now had its very own serial killer—and there, amid the perfume of truffles, he gave the killer a name: "*il Mostro di Firenze*," the Monster of Florence.

The austere savagery of the crimes preyed heavily on Spezi's mind. He began to have nightmares and was fearful for his young and beautiful Flemish wife, Myriam, and for their baby daughter, Eleonora. The Spezis lived in a converted monastery on a hill high above the city, in the very heart of the Monster's territory. What frightened Mario most of all, I think, was that coming in contact with such barbarity had forced him to confront the existence of a kernel of absolute evil within us all. The Monster, he once told me, was more like us than we might care to admit—it was a matter of degree, not kind.

Myriam urged her husband to seek help, and finally he agreed. Instead of going to a psychiatrist, Spezi, a devout Catholic, turned to a monk who ran a small mental-health practice out of his cell in a crumbling eleventh-century Franciscan monastery. Brother Galileo Babbini was short, with Coke-bottle glasses that magnified his piercing black eyes. He was always cold, even in summer, and wore a shabby down coat beneath his brown monk's habit. He seemed to have stepped out of the Middle Ages, and yet he was a highly trained psychoanalyst with a doctorate from the University of Rome.

Brother Galileo combined psychoanalysis with mystical Christianity to counsel people recovering from devastating trauma. His methods were not gentle, and he was unyielding in his pursuit of truth. He had, Spezi told me, an almost supernatural insight into the dark side of the human soul. Spezi would see him throughout the case; he would confide to me that Brother Galileo had preserved not only his sanity, but also his life.

**An anonymous letter arrived at police headquarters in Florence with a yellowed clipping about a 1968 case. Scrawled on the article was a bit of advice: "Take another look at this crime."**

The next killing took place eight months later, in June 1982, again on a Saturday night with no moon. The same gun was used and the same inexplicable mutilation performed. Twelve days later, an anonymous letter arrived at police headquarters in Florence. Inside was a yellowed clipping from *La Nazione* about a forgotten 1968 double murder—of a man and a woman who had been having sex in a parked car. Scrawled on the article was a bit of advice: "Take another look at this crime."

Investigators rifled through their old evidence files and found that, through a bureaucratic oversight, the shells collected in 1968 had not been disposed of. They were Winchester series "H" rounds, and each one bore on the rim the unique signature of the Monster's gun.

The police were confounded, because the 1968 murders had been solved. It was an open-and-shut case. A married woman, Barbara Locci, had gone to the movies with her lover; afterward, they had parked on a quiet lane to have sex. They were ambushed in the middle of the act and shot to death. The woman's husband, Stefano Mele, an immigrant from the island of Sardinia, was picked up the following morning; when a paraffin-glove test indicated he had recently fired a handgun, he broke down and confessed to killing his wife and her lover in a fit of jealousy. But Mele could not be the Monster of Florence: he had been in prison at the time of the 1981 killing, and had lived since his release in a halfway house in Verona.

Overnight, every crime journalist in Italy wanted to interview Stefano Mele. The priest who ran the halfway house in Verona was equally determined to keep them away. Spezi arrived with a filmmaker on the pretense of shooting a documentary on the halfway house's good work. Little by little, after taking generous footage of the priest and



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*September 1974: The Monster's first crime scene, at Borgo San Lorenzo*

NEW PRESS PHOTO (FIRENZE)

conducting a series of fake interviews with inmates, he reached Mele.

His first glimpse was discouraging: the Sardinian walked around in circles, taking tiny, nervous steps. An expressionless smile, frozen on his face, revealed a cemetery of rotten teeth. He mumbled rambling answers to Spezi's questions, his words defying interpretation. Then, at the end, he said something odd: "They need to figure out where that pistol is," he said. "Otherwise there will be more murders ... *They* will continue to kill ... *They* will continue."

Spezi grasped something the police would also learn: Stefano Mele had not been alone that night in 1968. It had not been a spontaneous crime of passion but a "*delitto di clan*," a clan killing, in which others from Mele's Sardinian circle had participated. Investigators theorized that one of the killers had enjoyed the experience so much that he had gone on to become the Monster of Florence—using the same gun.

This stage of the investigation became known as the "*Pista Sarda*," the Sardinian Connection. It focused on three Sardinian brothers: Francesco, Salvatore, and Giovanni Vinci. All three had been lovers in turn of the woman murdered in 1968, and one or more had been present at her killing.

The police first arrested Francesco.

In September 1983, with Francesco Vinci in jail, the Monster struck again. This was the killing that took place in the olive grove beyond our front door. A German couple had parked their Volkswagen camper in the grove for the night. It was only after killing the two lovers that the Monster realized he had made a mistake: both were men, one of whom had long blond hair. Instead of performing his usual mutilation, the Monster tore up a homosexual magazine he found in the camper and scattered the pieces outside.

The authorities refused to release Francesco Vinci. They believed one of his relatives had tried to throw them off by committing a new murder using the same gun—or, at the very least, that Francesco knew who the Monster was. Investigators became suspicious of another member of the clan, Antonio Vinci, and arrested him on firearms charges. They grilled the two men relentlessly, but were unable to break them, and finally were forced to release Antonio. Francesco remained in custody.

Four months later the police electrified Florence with an announcement, and once again Spezi had the scoop. *La Nazione* carried the banner headline: "*I Mostri Sono Due*"—"There Are Two Monsters." Two other members of the Sardinian group—both suspected of having been present at the 1968 clan killing—were arrested and charged with being the Monster of Florence. Francesco Vinci was released.

All winter the police worked on the two men, desperately trying to extract confessions and develop their case—with no success. Summer arrived, and tensions rose in Florence, even though suspects were in prison. Then, in July, the Monster struck again. Again he left the empty shells, which had become, perhaps intentionally, his calling card. He mutilated the woman and, adding a new horror, amputated and carried away her left breast.

This killing, which had occurred outside Vicchio, the birthplace of Giotto, triggered a nationwide outcry and generated headlines across Europe. Six times the Monster had attacked, killing twelve people, while the police had arrested and then been forced to release a steady stream of suspects. A special strike team was formed: the Squadra anti-Mostro, composed of both Polizia and Carabinieri. (Italy has two police forces that investigate crime, the civilian Polizia and a branch of the military known as the Carabinieri; they operate independently, and often antagonistically, especially in high-profile cases.) The government offered a reward of roughly $290,000 for information leading to the capture of the Monster, the highest bounty in Italian history. Warning posters went up, and millions of postcards were distributed to tourists entering Florence, advising them not to go into the hills at night.

For Mario Spezi, the case had become a career. His colleagues at *La Nazione* affectionately referred to him as the paper's "Monstrologer." He wrote a highly regarded book about the case that was made into two films. He often appeared on television, and his soft voice and highly developed sense of irony were not always pleasing to investigators, especially those with whom he disagreed. Spezi had a perverse passion for needling people in positions of power, and he developed a second career as a caricaturist for *La Nazione*, which regularly printed his outrageously funny cartoons of politicians, officials, and judges in the news.

At the same time, he continued to see Brother Galileo, who helped him make peace with the physical horror of the murder scenes and the metaphysical evil behind them. Galileo spent a great deal of time probing Spezi's nightmares and his childhood, forcing him to confront his own inner demons.



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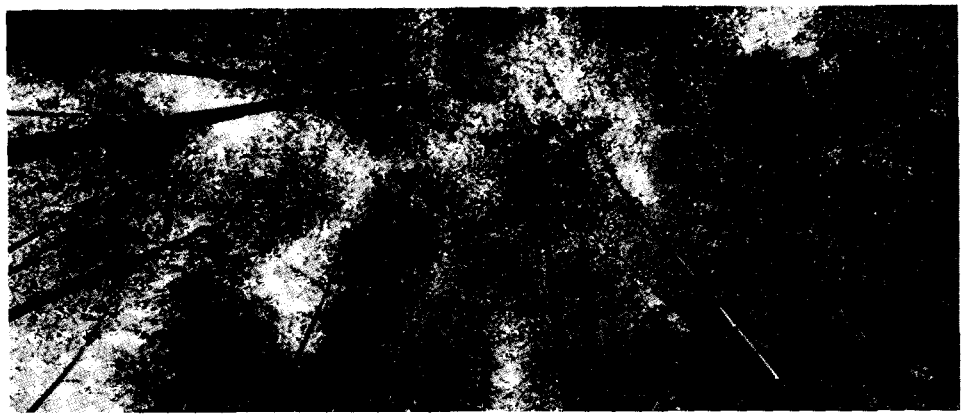

# The value of seeing the whole forest.

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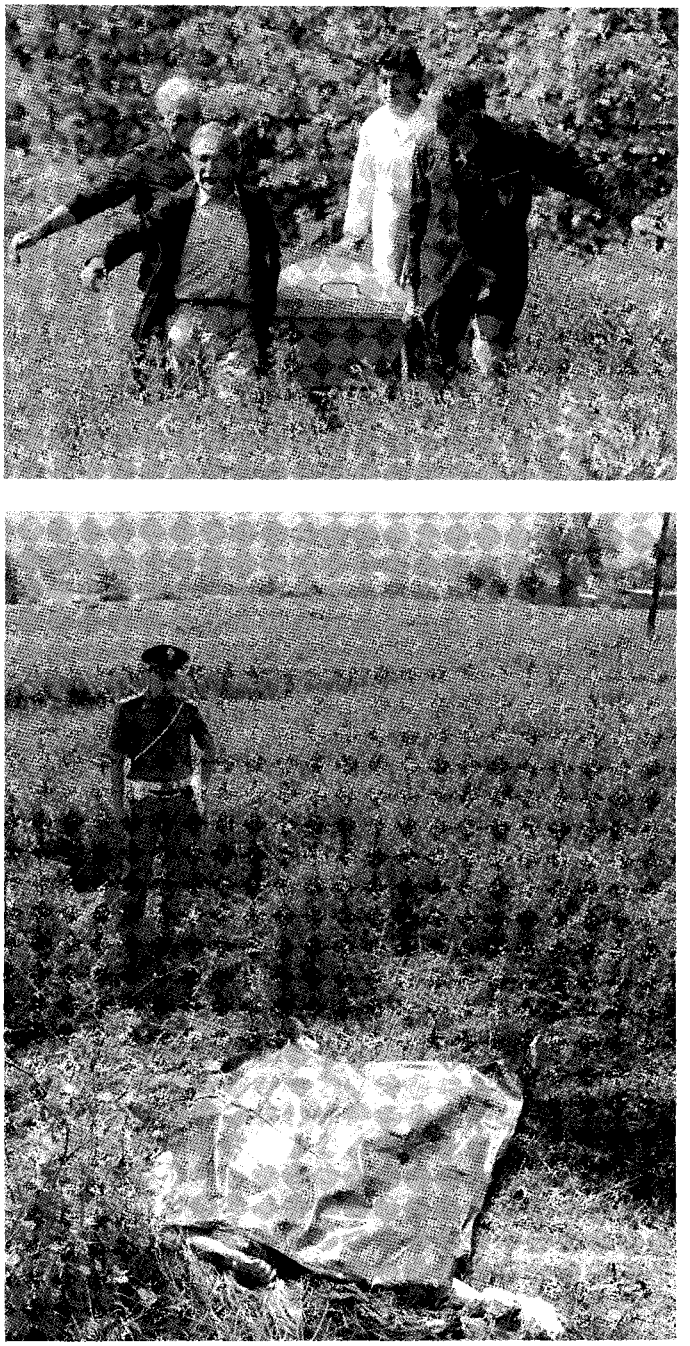

*July 1984: The crime scene at Vicchio*

In the summer of 1985 the Monster resurfaced in what would be the most terrible killing of all. The victims were two young French tourists who had pitched a tent in a field on the edge of a wood, not far from the villa where Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*. According to the reconstruction of the crime, the killer approached the tent and, with the tip of a knife, made a twelve-inch cut in the fly. The campers heard the noise and unzipped the front flap to investigate. The killer was waiting for them and opened fire, hitting the woman in the face and the man in the wrist. The woman died instantly, but the man, an amateur sprinter, dashed out of the tent and fled toward the trees. The killer raced after him, intercepted him in the woods, and cut his throat, almost decapitating him. The young man's blood stained the tree branches above to a height of ten feet. The killer returned to his female victim to perform the usual ritual mutilation—and again, he carved out and carried off her left breast.

This killing occurred on either Saturday or Sunday night; the date would become a matter of the utmost importance. The bodies were discovered by a mushroom picker on Monday at 2 p.m. At 5 p.m. the police took a detailed series of photographs, which showed the bodies covered with centimeter-long blowfly larvae.

On Tuesday, one of the prosecutors in the case, Silvia Della Monica, received an envelope in the mail. It had been addressed like a ransom note, with letters cut out of magazines, and inside was the victim's left nipple. As with everything else, the killer had been careful not to leave fingerprints; he had even avoided sealing the letter with his tongue. The experience shattered Della Monica: she withdrew from the case and, soon after, abandoned her career in law enforcement.

This, so far as we know, was the Monster's last killing. Over eleven years, fourteen lovers had been shot with the same gun. But the investigation had hardly begun. A judicial storm was mounting that would change its course and perhaps guarantee that the truth would never be known—and the killer never found. There were two key players in the coming storm: the chief prosecutor in the case, Pier Luigi Vigna, and the examining magistrate, Mario Rotella.

Vigna was already a celebrity in Italy when he assumed his role in the Monster case. He had ended a plague of kidnapping for ransom in Tuscany with a simple method: when a person was kidnapped, the state immediately froze the family's bank accounts. Vigna refused to travel with bodyguards, and he listed his name in the telephone book and on his doorbell, a gesture of defiance that Italians found admirable. The press ate up his pithy quotes and dry witticisms. He dressed like a true Florentine, in smartly cut suits and natty ties, and, in a country where a pretty face means a great deal, he was exceptionally good-looking, with finely cut features, crisp blue eyes, and a knowing smile.

Mario Rotella, the examining magistrate, was from the south of Italy, an immediate cause for suspicion among Tuscans. He sported an old-fashioned mustache, which made him look more like a greengrocer than a judge. And he was a pedant and a bore. He didn't like to mingle with journalists and, when cornered, answered their questions with unquotable circumlocutions. Under the Italian system, the prosecutor and the examining magistrate work together. But Vigna and Rotella disliked each other and disagreed on the direction the investigation should take.

The two suspects had been in jail when the French tourists were killed, and Vigna wanted to release them. Judge Rotella refused. He remained convinced that one of the clan members was the Monster—and that the others knew it. For a while Rotella prevailed. His focus turned to Salvatore Vinci, who had been involved with Barbara Locci and Stefano Mele in an elaborate sexual threesome, and who appeared to have been the prime shooter in the 1968 killing. Salvatore had

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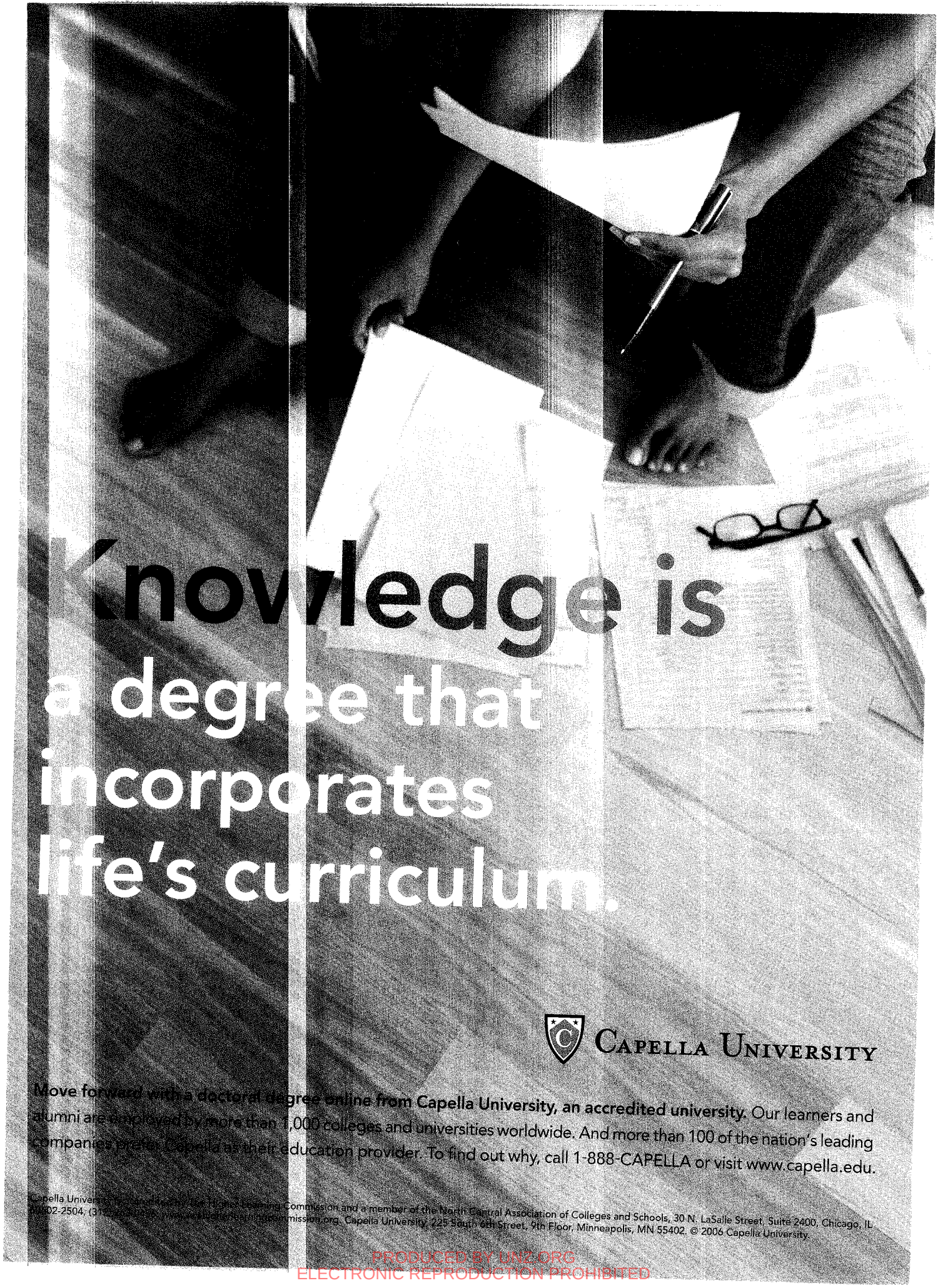


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been forced to leave Sardinia after his nineteen-year-old wife, Barbarina, was found asphyxiated by gas in their home. The death, in 1961, had officially been determined a suicide—although everyone in town believed it was a murder. Someone had mysteriously rescued their one-year-old son, Antonio, from the gas while leaving the boy's mother to die. Rotella didn't have enough evidence to arrest Salvatore Vinci for being the Monster, so he had him arrested instead for the murder of Barbarina. His plan was to convict him for that murder, and leverage it against him to identify the Monster.

The trial was a disaster: witnesses were vague, and evidence had gone stale. Antonio Vinci refused to testify against his father, at whom he glowered silently in court. Salvatore was acquitted, walked out of the courtroom, and vanished, slipping through the hands of the police, apparently forever.

This was the last straw for Vigna. He felt that the Sardinian investigation had led nowhere and brought nothing but humiliation. There was enormous public pressure to make a radical break. Vigna argued that the gun and bullets must have passed out of the hands of the Sardinians before the Monster killings had begun. He demanded that the investigation be started afresh. Rotella refused. He was supported by the Carabinieri, Vigna by the Polizia.

maniac, a beast," he said. "But I believe I have come to know and understand you better." He urged the Monster to give himself up. "We are here to help you," he said.

Inspector Perugini wiped the slate clean. He started with the axiom that the gun and bullets had somehow passed out of the hands of the Sardinians, and that the Monster was unconnected to the 1968 clan killing. The forensic examination of the crime scenes had been spectacularly incompetent: people came and went, picking up shells, taking pictures, throwing their cigarette butts on the ground. What forensic evidence was collected—a knee print, a bloody rag, a partial fingerprint—was never properly analyzed, and, infuriatingly, some had been allowed to spoil. Perugini viewed this evidence with skepticism; he was smitten by the idea of solving the crime with computers.

He examined tens of thousands of men in Tuscany, punching in various criteria—convictions for sex crimes, propensity for violence, past prison sentences—and winnowed down the results. The search eventually fingered a sixty-nine-year-old Tuscan farmer named Pietro Pacciani, an alcoholic brute of a man with thick arms and a short, blunt body who had been convicted of sexually assaulting his daughters. His prison sentence coincided with the gap

**The crime-scene evidence suggested that the Monster was a tall, right-handed man in excellent physical condition, who acted with almost preternatural sangfroid.**

It was an ugly fight, and, as is usual in Italy, it devolved into a personality contest, which Rotella naturally lost. The Sardinian Connection was formally closed, and the suspects—including the men who had participated in the 1968 killing—were officially absolved. The problem was that, if Rotella was right, the investigation could now proceed in every direction except the correct one. Officers in the Carabinieri were so angry at this turn of events that they withdrew the organization from the Squadra anti-Mostro and renounced all involvement in the case.

Vigna reorganized the Squadra anti-Mostro into an all-Polizia force under the leadership of Commissario (Chief Inspector) Ruggero Perugini, later fictionalized as Chief Inspector Rinaldo Pazzi in Thomas Harris's novel *Hannibal*. Harris had followed the case while writing the novel, and he had been a guest in Perugini's home. (The chief inspector was not altogether pleased to see his alter ego gutted and hung from the Palazzo Vecchio by Hannibal Lecter.) Perugini was more dignified than his sweaty and troubled fictional counterpart in the movie version of *Hannibal*. He spoke with a Roman accent, but his movements and dress, and the elegant way he handled his pipe, made him seem more English than Italian.

The new chief inspector became an instant celebrity when, on a popular news program, he fixed his Ray-Bans on the camera and spoke directly to the Monster in firm but not unsympathetic tones. "People call you a monster, a

in killings between 1974 and 1981. And he was violent: in 1951 he had bashed in the head of a traveling salesman whom he had caught seducing his fiancée, and then raped her next to the dead man's body.

Inspector Perugini had his suspect; all that remained was to gather evidence. In reviewing Pacciani's old crimes, Perugini was struck by something: Pacciani had told the police he'd gone crazy when he had seen his fiancée uncover her left breast for her seducer. This statement, he felt, linked Pacciani to the Monster, who had amputated the left breast of two of his victims.

Perugini searched Pacciani's house and came up with incriminating evidence. Prime among this was a reproduction of Botticelli's *Primavera*, the famous painting in the Uffizi Gallery that depicts (in part) a pagan nymph with flowers spilling from her mouth. The picture reminded the inspector of the gold chain lying in the mouth of one of the Monster's first victims. This clue so captivated Perugini that the cover of the book he would publish about the case showed Botticelli's nymph vomiting bloody flowers.

Perugini organized a twelve-day search of Pacciani's property. The police took apart the farmer's miserable house and plowed up his garden. The haul was pretty disappointing, but on the twelfth day, just as the operation was winding down, Perugini announced with great fanfare that he had found an unfired .22 bullet in the garden. Later, in court, experts said



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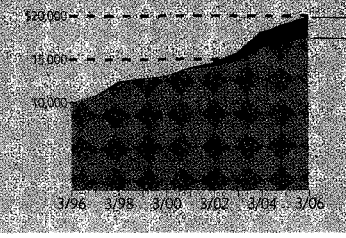


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it "might" have been inserted into the infamous Beretta and ejected without being fired—the ballistics report was inconclusive. In Pacciani's garage, the police found a scrap of torn rag, which was duly cataloged. Not long afterward, the Carabinieri received a piece of a .22 Beretta wrapped in a torn rag, with an anonymous note saying it had been found under a tree where Pacciani often went. When the two rags were compared, they matched up.

*Pietro Pacciani*

Pacciani was arrested on January 16, 1993, and charged with being the Monster of Florence. The public, by and large, approved of his arrest. Spezi, however, remained unconvinced. He felt that a drunken, semiliterate peasant given to fits of rage could not possibly have committed the meticulous crimes he had seen. Spezi continued to feel that the Sardinian investigation had been prematurely closed. He laid out his views in a series of carefully reasoned articles, but few readers were persuaded: Pacciani's trial was being broadcast almost every night on television, and the drama of the proceedings overwhelmed all logic. Florentines have never forgotten the sight of Pacciani's violated daughters (one of whom had entered a convent), weeping on the witness stand as they described being raped by their father.

This was melodrama worthy of Puccini. Pacciani rocked and sobbed during the proceedings, sometimes crying out in his Tuscan dialect, "I am a sweet little lamb! ... I am here like Christ on the cross!" At other times he erupted, face on fire, spittle flying from his lips. Thomas Harris attended the trial, taking notes in longhand on yellow legal pads. The prosecutors presented no murder weapon and no reliable eyewitnesses. Even Pacciani's wife and daughters, who hated him, said he couldn't have been the Monster—he was home drunk most of the time, yelling, hitting them, and acting the bully.

Pacciani was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. During the mandatory appeal, the prosecutor assigned to handle the case did something almost unheard of: he refused to prosecute. He became Pacciani's unlikely advocate, decrying in court the lack of evidence and comparing the police investigation to the work of Inspector Clouseau. On February 13, 1996, Pacciani was acquitted. A higher court sent the case back to be retried, but Pacciani died in February 1998, before the new trial could begin.

On the very day of Pacciani's acquittal, the police brought forward new witnesses and dramatically announced that they had a confession in hand, in an attempt to salvage their case. The judge refused to allow them to testify, and excoriated the police for the last-minute maneuver. But the investigation was far from over, and eventually their story would emerge. The first surprise witness had actually confessed to being Pacciani's accomplice. He said that he and Pacciani had been hired by a wealthy Florentine doctor to "handle a few little jobs." These "little jobs," investigators later said, were to collect female body parts for Black Masses, to be used as offerings to the devil. The man made many odd claims and contradicted himself continually. He implicated a third man, and the two men were convicted, in a subsequent trial, of murder; one was sentenced to life in prison and the other to twenty-six years.

Thus began the investigation that remains open to this day: the search for the Florentine doctor and the other *mandanti* (masterminds) behind the killings. Inconveniently, the police's self-inculpating witness said he didn't know the doctor's name—he claimed that only Pacciani did. But Pacciani denied the whole story to his dying day.

With the death of Pacciani and the conviction of his accomplices, the investigation receded into the shadows. Most people felt the case had been solved, and Florence moved on. And perhaps it was just as well. For over time, thread by thread, the web of evidence began to unravel. The rag and gun pieces were found to have been a manufactured clue, although by whom was not established. The expert who had been asked to certify that the bullet found in Pacciani's garden might have been inserted into the Monster's gun complained of pressure put on him. On assignment from a television station, Spezi videotaped a police officer, present at the search of Pacciani's property, saying it was his impression that the chief inspector had planted the bullet. The television station refused to air the segment; Spezi published the allegation—and was promptly sued for libel. (He won the case, but not without further antagonizing the Squadra anti-Mostro and its boss.)

Spezi was by now exhausted—by the case, which he had covered for more than fifteen years, and by the grueling life of a crime correspondent. Brother Galileo had urged him to quit his job. Spezi's daughter was growing up, and he was feeling the pinch of his journalist's salary. When his wife's cousin offered him a lucrative partnership in his luggage business, he jumped. *La Nazione* agreed to keep him on a freelance contract. It would leave him time to fulfill a longtime dream of writing mystery novels, and to embark on his own counter-investigation, which became a hobby of sorts.

Around this time, Spezi received crucial help from a high-ranking official in the Carabinieri whose identity he has never revealed, not even to me. This man was part of a group of officers who had continued a secret investigation into the killings after the Carabinieri officially withdrew from the case. His clandestine group had identified a possible suspect as the Monster, a man who had previously been arrested and released.

One of Spezi's big scoops had been the discovery of a report prepared for Inspector Perugini by the FBI's Behavioral

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Science Unit in Quantico, Virginia. It had been commissioned in secret and then suppressed, because it didn't describe Pacciani. The report cataloged the killer's likely characteristics, explained his probable motive, and speculated as to how and why he killed, how he chose his targets, what he did with the body parts he collected, and much more. Its conclusion was that the Monster was of a type well known to the FBI: a lone, sexually impotent male with a pathological hatred of women, who satisfied his libidinous cravings through killing.

The FBI report said that the Monster chose the places for his crimes, not the victims, and that he would kill only in familiar locations. The murders had been committed in some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world, over a large area encompassing the hills south, east, and north of Florence. The police had stared at pins in maps for years, never finding a pattern. But when Spezi mapped the life and movements of the Carabinieri's suspect to the locations of the killings, he found surprising overlaps.

After that first meeting at Caffè Ricchi, Mario Spezi and I became friends. He often talked about the case, and I began to share his frustration at its unsatisfying conclusion. I cannot remember exactly when my curiosity became more than idle speculation, but by the spring of 2001, Spezi and I had agreed to write something together—a collaboration that would eventually take the form of a book. But first, I needed a crash course from the "Monstrologer."

A couple of days a week I would shove my laptop into a backpack and bicycle the six miles from our home to Spezi's. The last kilometer was a bear, almost straight uphill through groves of knotted olive trees. I would find him in the dining room, thick with smoke, with papers and photographs scattered about the table. Myriam, Spezi's wife, would check in on us every now and then and bring us cups of espresso or fresh-squeezed orange juice. Spezi was always careful to keep the strongest details—and the crime-scene photographs—well out of her sight.

He went through the entire history chronologically, chain-smoking all the way, from time to time plucking a document or a photograph from the heap by way of illustration. I took notes furiously on my computer, in an almost indecipherable mix of English and Italian (I was still learning the language then). "*Bello*, eh?" he often said when he had finished recounting some particularly egregious example of investigative incompetence.

We visited the crime scenes together and tracked down, where we could, the family members of the victims. We went to Vicchio to visit the mother of one of the female victims. She was living a hollow existence in what had once been an imposing house in the center of town. Her husband had squandered the family fortune on his futile search for the killer and had dropped dead of a heart attack at police headquarters during one of his many visits.

I began to understand, in a small way, the immensity of the evil that Brother Galileo—now dead—had helped Spezi to accept. And yet, despite the darkness of our hunt, my days with Spezi were my happiest in Italy. My wife and I enjoyed many elegant dinners with Mario and Myriam on their terrace overlooking the hills, where they gathered writers, photographers, countesses—even, one night, a woman who was half Apache, half Florentine. Spezi had a seemingly inexhaustible store of outrageous tales, which he recounted with the quiet delight of an epicure serving a mossy bottle of Château Pétrus. As he told a story, he often imitated the players, speaking in flawless dialect. Sometimes he would require each guest to bring a story to dinner, in lieu of flowers or wine.

Spezi's view of the case was not complicated. He had nothing but contempt for the conspiracy theories and heated speculation about satanic sects. The simplest and most obvious explanation, to his mind, was most likely the correct one. He had always believed—and I came to share his conviction—that the Monster of Florence was a lone psychopath, and that the key to finding him was the gun used in the 1968 clan killing. Every cop, Spezi often told me, knows that a gun used in a homicide—especially a clan killing—is never disposed of casually. It is either destroyed or kept in a safe place. One of the killers had taken the gun home.

Spezi believed that the Monster must either be Salvatore Vinci, the man Rotella had had his eye on, or someone close to him—someone with access to the gun *and* the box of bullets. It was that simple. He turned to the crime-scene evidence. It suggested that the Monster was a tall, right-handed man in excellent physical condition who acted with almost preternatural sangfroid (ruling out Pacciani, who was short, fat, old, and usually drunk). The killer was an expert shot and skilled with a knife.

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*Salvatore Vinci*

When we had chased down every other person we could find with some connection to the crimes, I pressed Spezi on the subject of the Carabinieri's suspect, who he told me was the son of one of the original Sardinians. He was still alive and living in Florence. (I will not mention his name, since the evidence against him remains circumstantial.) The stumbling block was Myriam, who had begged her husband not to approach him. Alone, Spezi had heeded her pleas, but there were two of us now, and I goaded him on. Without telling Myriam, Spezi and I began to plan our visit. We developed a cover story—that I was an American journalist and Spezi my translator, and we were conducting a series of interviews about the Monster of Florence case. Out of deference to Myriam's fears, we decided to use false names.



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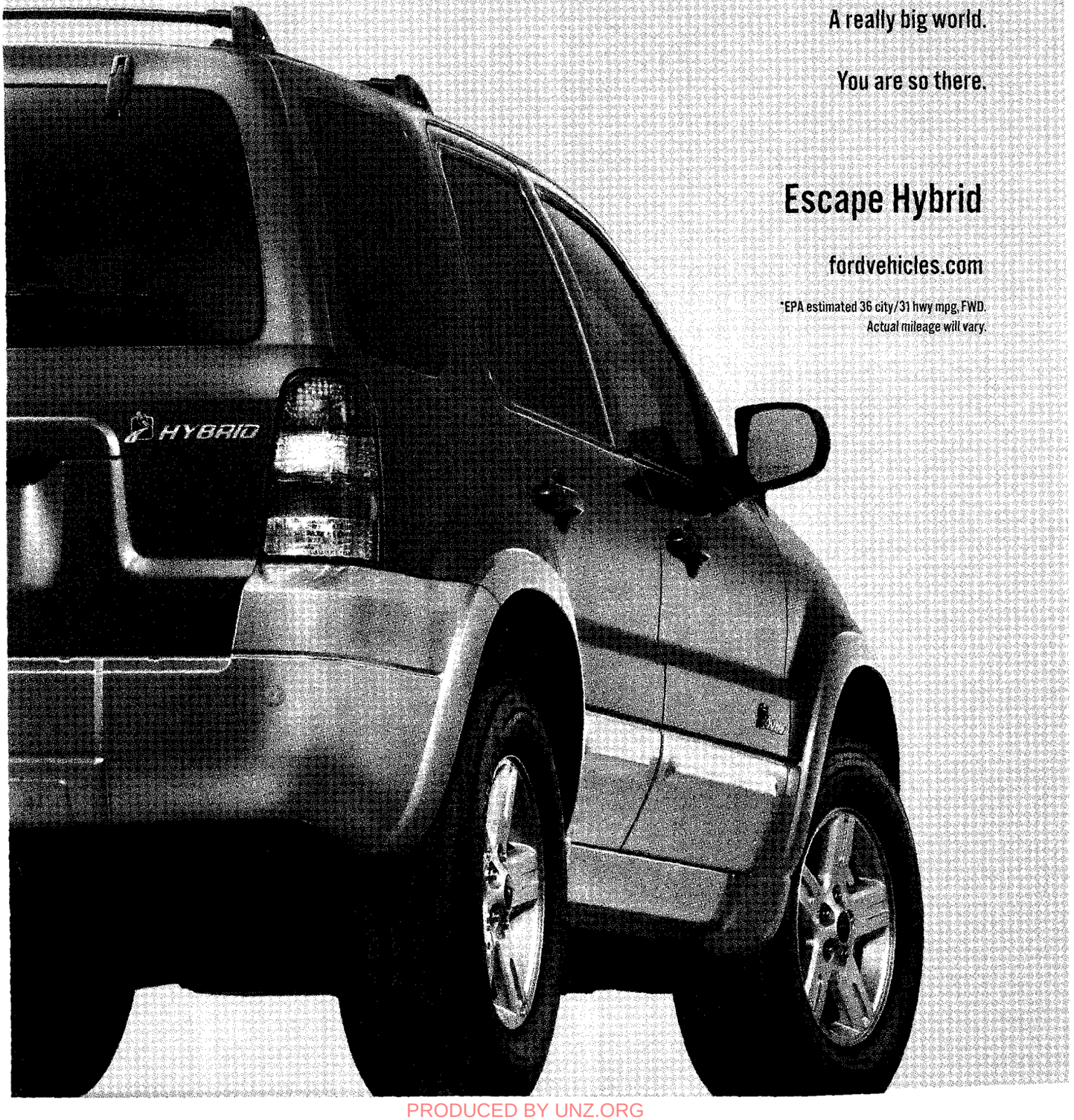


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*September 1985: In the Monster's wake at Scopeti*

For years, the Sardinian had been living a quiet life in a working-class area west of Florence. We arrived at his apartment building at 9:40 p.m., when we would be most likely to find him home. His neighborhood was neat, even cheerful, with tiny garden plots in front of modest stuccoed apartment buildings. There was a grocery store on the corner, and bicycles were chained to the railings. Across the street, past a row of umbrella pines, lay the skeletons of abandoned textile factories.

Spezi pressed the intercom, and a woman's voice asked, "Who is it?"

"Marco Tiezzi," Spezi replied.

We were buzzed in without further questions.

A man greeted us at the door, wearing only a pair of tight shorts. He recognized Spezi immediately: "Ah, Spezi! It's you!" he said with a smile. "I must've misheard the name. I've wanted to meet you for the longest time." He invited us to be seated at a small kitchen table and offered us a glass of Mirto, a Sardinian liqueur. His wife, who had been washing spinach in a sink, silently left the room.

Our host was a strikingly handsome man with a dimpled smile. His curly black hair was lightly peppered with gray, his body tanned and heavily muscled. He projected a cocky air of working-class charm. While we talked about the case, he casually rippled the muscles of his upper arms or slid his hands over them in what seemed an unconscious gesture of self-admiration. He spoke in a husky and compelling voice that reminded me of Robert De Niro's.

Spezi casually slipped his tape recorder out of his pocket and laid it on the table. "May I?"

The man flexed and smiled. "No," he said. "I'm jealous of my voice."

Spezi took notes in longhand, slowly working his way from generic questions toward his real objective. (The quoted passages below are from his notes.)

"Your father had strange sexual habits," Spezi said. "Perhaps that was a reason you hated him?"

"Back then I knew nothing about it. Only later did I hear about his … tics."

"But you and he had some really big fights. Even when you were young. In the spring of 1974, for example, you were charged with breaking and entering and theft."

"That's not correct. Since he didn't know if I had taken anything, I was charged only with violation of domicile. Another time we had a big fight, and I pinned him, putting my scuba knife to his throat, but he broke free and I locked myself in the bathroom."

"When did you leave Florence?"

"In the beginning of 1975. First I went to Sardinia, and then to Lake Como."

"Then you returned and got married."

"Right. I married a childhood sweetheart, but it didn't work. We married in 1982 and separated in 1985."

"What didn't work?"

"She couldn't have children."

Spezi did not mention he had learned that the marriage had been annulled for non-consummation. "Can I ask you a rather direct question?" he said.

"Sure. I may not answer it."

"If your father owned the .22 Beretta, you were the person in the best position to take it. Perhaps during the breaking and entering in the spring of 1974."

He didn't answer immediately. "I have proof I didn't take it," he said at last.

"Which is?"

"If I had taken it, I would have fired it into my father's forehead."

Spezi pressed on. He pointed out that our host had been away from Florence from 1975 to 1980, when there were no Monster killings. When he returned, they began again.

The Sardinian leaned back in his seat, and his smile broadened. "Those years were the best of my life," he said, "up there at Lake Como. I had a house, I ate well, and all those girls …" He whistled and made a vulgar Italian gesture.

"And so," Spezi said, "you're not … the Monster of Florence?"

There was only a brief hesitation. The Sardinian never ceased smiling, not even for an instant. "No," he said. "I like my pussy whole."

We rose to go. Our host followed us to the door. Just before opening it, he leaned toward Spezi and spoke in a low and casual voice. "Ah, Spezi, I was forgetting something." He leaned even closer and smiled. His voice took on a hoarse, gravelly tone. "Listen carefully: I never joke around."

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Spezi and I agreed that we would publish our book first in Italian, and then I would rewrite it and publish it in English. The publisher of my murder mysteries in Italy, Sonzogno, a division of the Italian publishing house RCS Libri, gave us a contract and an advance. The book, which was titled *Dolci Colline di Sangue* (*Sweet Hills of Blood*, a play on the phrase *Dolci colline di Firenze*), was scheduled for publication in April 2006.

Meanwhile, the search for the hidden masterminds began to intensify. Time had passed, and the old investigators had retired or been promoted. Vigna was appointed head of Italy's anti-Mafia unit, while Perugini went on to become the liaison officer with the American FBI. A new investigator rose to the fore: Chief Inspector Michele Giuttari, who had organized and headed an elite police unit known as GIDES (Investigative Group for Serial Crimes), heir to Perugini's Squadra anti-Mostro. The newspapers dubbed him "*il Superpoliziotto*," because he was, in practice, answerable to nobody.

In the summer of 2001, the case once again hit the front pages in Italy. GIDES had focused its attention on a villa in Chianti where Pietro Pacciani had worked as a gardener. This villa, which the papers dubbed the "Villa of Horrors," was suspected of being the meeting place for the cult of devil worshippers who had supposedly hired Pacciani to do their bidding. One important clue that a satanic sect was behind the killings was a rough, hexagonal stone in the form of a broken pyramid found at the site of one of the crimes. Only Giuttari realized its significance. "I hypothesized that it was an object connected to the occult," he would later explain in one of his many books on the case, "and that, for some reason, it had been left there deliberately."

Spezi ridiculed this conclusion in the media and produced a similar stone, which a friend had given him. He pointed out that it was not an esoteric object at all, but a type of doorstop commonly found in old Tuscan farmhouses. On May 14, he appeared on a popular TV show with an explosive allegation: he had shown the photographs of the murdered French tourists to one of Europe's leading forensic entomologists, and the entomologist had concluded, by examining the larvae on the corpses, that the lovers could not have been killed any later than Saturday night.

This determination, if true, was fatal to the satanic-sect theory: Pacciani's supposed accomplice swore the French tourists were killed on Sunday night. If the crime had occurred Saturday, all his claims would be thrown into question. What's more, Pacciani had an ironclad alibi for Saturday night.

Much to Spezi's dismay, Giuttari dismissed the entomologist's findings and pressed ahead with his investigation. Spezi's appearance on television had another effect entirely from that intended: it seemed to have inspired the chief inspector's undying hatred.

In June 2004, I moved back to the States with my family, into a house we had built on the coast of Maine. When I left Italy, Mario gave me a pencil drawing he'd made of Pacciani during the trial and a caricature of myself, spying on my wife through a keyhole. I hung both on the wall of my writing shack, in the woods behind our house, along with a photograph of Spezi in his fedora and trench coat, standing in a butcher's shop under a rack of hog jowls.

Spezi and I spoke frequently. I missed my life in Italy—but Maine was quiet, and quiet is what a writer needs. We continued to work on the book by e-mail and telephone. Spezi did most of the actual writing, while I made suggestions and contributed a few chapters, which he had to rewrite (I write in Italian at about a fifth-grade level). He continued to keep me abreast of the "*Pista Satanica*," which, curiously, seemed to be heating up.

That summer, Spezi called me with a strange bit of news. An old friend of his, a pharmacist, was being investigated for the death of Francesco Narducci, a gastroenterologist whose body had been found floating in Lake Trasimeno some twenty years earlier. The original investigators had considered it a suicide—Narducci had been heavily into drugs and was known to be depressed—but GIDES suspected that the doctor may in fact have been murdered by the Monster's satanic sect. This brought into the investigation the public prosecutor who has jurisdiction over Lake Trasimeno: the *pubblico ministero* of Perugia, Giuliano Mignini.

**This was melodrama worthy of Puccini. The accused rocked and sobbed during the proceedings, sometimes crying out, "I am a sweet little lamb! ... I am here like Christ on the cross!"**

On November 18, 2004, at 6 a.m., Spezi and his family were awoken by the sound of their door buzzer. "*Polizia!*" screamed a voice. "*Perquisizione!*" The police were from GIDES, Giuttari's squad. Their warrant gave two reasons for the search: Spezi had "materially damaged the investigation by casting doubt on the accusations through use of the medium of television," and he had "evidenced a peculiar and suspicious interest in ... the investigation." He was served with an *avviso di garanzia*, one step short of a formal indictment. It listed seventeen crimes for which Spezi was being investigated, all undisclosed.

For seven hours the police searched the apartment, while Spezi, Myriam, and their daughter looked on. Officers pulled books off the shelves and rummaged through photos, letters, and schoolbooks, scattering things on the floor. They took everything Spezi had that related to the case: his computer, disks, archives, clippings, interviews, even our notes and drafts of the book. They found Spezi's old doorstop, which a document would later describe as having been "secreted



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behind a door." To Giuttari, this became one of the most important fruits of the search.

Twelve months later, Spezi opened the newspaper and read a headline about himself: "Narducci Murder: Journalist Investigated."

"When I read that," Spezi told me, "it was like a hallucination. I felt I was inside a film of Kafka's *Trial*, remade by Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin." Spezi had gone from journalist to suspect.

It was in this climate that I arrived in Florence on February 14 of this year. The kids were on winter vacation, and plane tickets were cheap. I was anxious to see my old friend. Our book would be published in two months, and Spezi hoped we might do some preliminary publicity and line up an evening presentation at Seeber, one of the best bookstores in Florence.

I visited Spezi on February 15. He told me he had recently heard from a source that during the Monster killings and afterward, a group of Sardinians had frequented a run-down outbuilding on the thousand-acre estate of a grand villa outside Florence. The source claimed to have a friend who had been at the building a few months earlier, with the Carabinieri's suspect (the man I've been calling "the Sardinian"). He had seen six locked iron boxes and two guns: a machine pistol and a .22 Beretta.

"What are those boxes?" the friend had asked.

"That's *my* stuff," the Sardinian allegedly said, slapping his chest.

Six locked iron boxes. Six female victims. A .22 Beretta. It was almost too perfect to be true.

I asked Spezi what he planned to do. He said he had been agonizing about this. He smelled a scoop—the scoop of a lifetime. He had driven past the villa a couple of times, but in the end he had decided that he had no choice but to call the police.

I had never seen Mario so excited. "This could be it," he told me. "The culmination of all my years on this case. And you'll be here to see it." He said the villa was open to the public for sales of wine and olive oil, and that it was rented out for parties.

I asked if I could see it. "Sure," he said. "Why not?" We couldn't go to the outbuilding, but we could at least see the part open to the public.

We decided to go the next day, accompanied by a friend of Spezi's who owned a security firm in Florence and from his days as a cop knew the source, an ex-con. Driving over to his friend's office, Spezi apologized for the state of his car: a few days earlier someone had wrecked the door and stolen his radio.

It was raining when we arrived at the villa. A woman leaned out a window and said the salesroom was closed for lunch. We took a desultory stroll along the drive and returned to the car. We had been there about ten minutes. It was a disappointing visit, at least to me; something about the whole story didn't feel quite right.

Two days later, Spezi called me on my cell phone. "We did it," he said. "We did it all." He didn't go into details, but I knew what he meant: he had given the information to the police. He also said, before I could ask too many questions, "The telephone is bad." For two years he had been complaining that the police were tapping his phones.

On February 22, as I was heading out for a morning coffee, my cell phone rang. A man speaking Italian informed me that he was a police detective and that he needed to see me—immediately. No, it wasn't a joke. And no, he couldn't tell me what it was about, only that it was "*obbligatorio*."

I chose the most public place possible, the Piazza della Signoria. Two plainclothes detectives from CIDES took me into the Palazzo Vecchio, where, in the magnificent Renaissance courtyard, surrounded by Vasari's frescoes, I was presented with a legal summons to appear before Judge Mignini. The detective politely explained that a no-show would be a serious crime; it would put him in the regrettable position of having to come and get me.

I asked, "Is this about the Monster of Florence case?"

"*Bravo*," said the detective.

The next day, I was ushered into a pleasant office in the Procura della Repubblica, just outside the ancient city walls of Perugia. Present were one of the detectives from the previous day, a small and very tense captain of police with orange hair, a stenographer, and Giuliano Mignini, sitting behind a desk. I had dressed smartly—Italians judge harshly in such matters—and I had a folded copy of the *International Herald Tribune* under my arm as a prop.

Mignini was a small man of indeterminate middle age, well groomed, with a fleshy face and thinning hair. His voice was calm and pleasant and he addressed me with elaborate courtesy, bestowing the honorific of *dottore*, which, in Italy, denotes the highest respect. He explained that I had the right to an interpreter, but finding one might take many hours, during which time I would be unpleasantly detained. In his opinion, I spoke Italian fluently. I asked if I needed a lawyer, and he said that, although it was of course my right, it wasn't necessary; he merely wanted to ask a few questions of a routine nature.

His questions were gentle, posed almost apologetically. The stenographer typed the questions, and my answers, into her computer. Sometimes Mignini rephrased my answers in better Italian, checking solicitously to see if that was what I had meant to say. He asked me about Spezi's lawyer, Alessandro Traversi, and wanted to know what I could say about Spezi's legal strategy. He named many names and asked if Spezi had ever mentioned them. Most were unfamiliar. The questions went on like this for an hour, and I was starting to feel reassured. I even had a glimmer of hope that I might get out in time to join my wife and children for lunch at a nearby restaurant, which came highly recommended in the guidebooks.

At this point the conversation turned to our visit to the villa. Why did we go? What did we do there? Where exactly did we walk? Was there talk of a gun? Of iron boxes? Was my back ever to Spezi? Did we see anyone there? Who? What was said?



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- Have kidney or liver problems

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## Medication Guide for Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

(See the end of this Medication Guide for a list of prescription NSAID medicines.)

**What is the most important information I should know about medicines called Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?**

**NSAID medicines may increase the chance of a heart attack or stroke that can lead to death.**

This chance increases:

- with longer use of NSAID medicines
- in people who have heart disease

**NSAID medicines should never be used right before or after a heart surgery called a "coronary artery bypass graft (CABG)."**

**NSAID medicines can cause ulcers and bleeding in the stomach and intestines at any time during treatment. Ulcers and bleeding:**

- can happen without warning symptoms
- may cause death

***The chance of a person getting an ulcer or bleeding increases with:***

- taking medicines called "corticosteroids" and "anticoagulants"
- longer use
- smoking
- drinking alcohol
- older age
- having poor health

***NSAID medicines should only be used:***

- exactly as prescribed
- at the lowest dose possible for your treatment
- for the shortest time needed

**What are Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?**

NSAID medicines are used to treat pain and redness, swelling, and heat (inflammation) from medical conditions such as:

- different types of arthritis
- menstrual cramps and other types of short-term pain

**Who should not take a Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drug (NSAID)?**

***Do not take an NSAID medicine:***

- if you had an asthma attack, hives, or other allergic reaction with aspirin or any other NSAID medicine
- for pain right before or after heart bypass surgery

**Tell your healthcare provider:**

- about all of your medical conditions.
- about all of the medicines you take. NSAIDs and some other medicines can interact with each other and cause serious side effects. **Keep a list of your medicines to show to your health care provider and pharmacist.**
- if you are pregnant. **NSAID medicines should not be used by pregnant women late in their pregnancy.**
- if you are breastfeeding. **Talk to your doctor.**

**What are the possible side effects of Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)?**

| **Serious side effects include:** | **Other side effects include:** |
|---|---|
| • heart attack<br>• stroke<br>• high blood pressure<br>• heart failure from body swelling (fluid retention)<br>• kidney problems including kidney failure<br>• bleeding and ulcers in the stomach and intestine<br>• low red blood cells (anemia)<br>• life-threatening skin reactions<br>• life-threatening allergic reactions<br>• liver problems including liver failure<br>• asthma attacks in people who have asthma | • stomach pain<br>• constipation<br>• diarrhea<br>• gas<br>• heartburn<br>• nausea<br>• vomiting<br>• dizziness |

**Get emergency help right away if you have any of the following symptoms:**

- *shortness of breath or trouble breathing*
- chest pain
- weakness in one part or side of your body
- *slurred speech*
- swelling of the face or throat

**Stop your NSAID medicine and call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following symptoms:**

- nausea
- more tired or weaker than usual
- itching
- your skin or eyes look yellow
- *stomach pain*
- flu-like symptoms
- vomit blood
- *there is blood in your bowel movement or it is black and sticky like tar*
- skin rash or blisters with fever
- unusual weight gain
- swelling of the arms and legs, hands and feet

These are not all the side effects with NSAID medicines. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist for more information about NSAID medicines.

**Other information about Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)**

- Aspirin is an NSAID medicine but it does not increase the chance of a heart attack. Aspirin can cause bleeding in the brain, stomach, and intestines. Aspirin can also cause ulcers in the stomach and intestines.
- Some of these NSAID medicines are sold in lower doses without a prescription (over-the-counter). Talk to your healthcare provider before using over-the-counter NSAIDs for more than 10 days.

**NSAID medicines that need a prescription**

| **Generic Name** | **Tradename** |
|---|---|
| Celecoxib | Celebrex |
| Diclofenac | Cataflam, Voltaren, Arthrotec (combined with misoprostol) |
| Diflunisal | Dolobid |
| Etodolac | Lodine, Lodine XL |
| Fenoprofen | Nalfon, Nalfon 200 |
| Flurbiprofen | Ansaid |
| Ibuprofen | Motrin, Tab-Profen, Vicoprofen (combined with hydrocodone), Combunox (combined with oxycodone) |
| Indomethacin | Indocin, Indocin SR, Indo-Lemmon, Indomethagan |
| Ketoprofen | Oruvail |
| Ketorolac | Toradol |
| Mefenamic Acid | Ponstel |
| Meloxicam | Mobic |
| Nabumetone | Relafen |
| Naproxen | Naprosyn, Anaprox, Anaprox DS, EC-Naproxyn, Naprelan, Naprapac (copackaged with lansoprazole) |
| Oxaprozin | Daypro |
| Piroxicam | Feldene |
| Sulindac | Clinoril |
| Tolmetin | Tolectin, Tolectin DS, Tolectin 600 |

*This Medication Guide has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.*

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I answered truthfully, trying to suppress a damnable habit of over-explanation, but I could see that Mignini was not happy. He repeated the same questions, in different forms. It began to dawn on me that the previous line of inquiry had been nothing more than a few balls lobbed in the bullpen. Now, the game had begun.

Mignini's face flushed as his frustration mounted. He frequently instructed the stenographer to read back my earlier answers. "You said that, and now you say this. Which is true, Dottor Preston? *Which is true?*"

I began to stumble over my words (as I've noted, I am not fluent in Italian, especially legal and criminological terms). With a growing sense of dismay, I could hear from my own stammering, hesitant voice that I was sounding like a liar.

"Listen to this," Mignini said. He nodded to the stenographer, who pressed a button on her computer. There was the ringing of a phone, and then my voice:

"*Pronto.*"

"*Ciao, sono Mario.*"

"What?"

"You and Spezi either planted, or were planning to plant, *false evidence* at that villa in an attempt to frame an innocent man for being the Monster of Florence, to derail this investigation, and to deflect suspicion from Spezi. *That* is what you were doing. This comment—*'We did it all'*—that is what he meant."

I was floored. I stammered that this was just a theory, but Mignini interrupted me and said, "These are not theories. They are facts!" He insisted I knew perfectly well that Spezi was being investigated for the murder of Narducci, and that I knew more about the murder than I was letting on. "That makes you an accessory. Yes, Dottor Preston," Mignini insisted, "I can *hear* it in your voice. I can hear the tone of knowledge, of deep familiarity with these events. Just listen." His voice rose with restrained exaltation. "*Listen* to yourself!"

And, for maybe the tenth time, he replayed the phone conversation. "Perhaps you have been duped, but I don't think so. You *know*! And now, you have one last chance—one *last* chance—to tell us what you know, or I will charge you with perjury. I don't care; I will do it, even if the news goes around the world tomorrow."

**Spezi and his family were awoken by the sound of their door buzzer. "*Polizia!*" screamed a voice. "*Perquisizione!*" Spezi had gone from journalist to suspect.**

Spezi and I chatted for a moment while I listened in amazement to my own voice, clearer on the intercept than in the original call on my lousy cell phone. Mignini played it once, then again. He stopped at the point where Spezi said, "We did it all," and fixed his eyes on me: "What exactly did you do, Dottor Preston?"

I explained that Spezi was referring to his decision to report to the police what he had heard about possible evidence hidden at the villa.

"No, Dottor Preston." He played the recording again and again, asking repeatedly, "What is this thing you did? *What did you do?*" He seized on Spezi's comment that the telephone was bad. What did he mean by that?

I explained that he thought the phone was tapped.

And why, Mignini wanted to know, were we concerned about the phones being tapped *if we weren't engaged in illegal activity*?

"Because it isn't nice to have your phone tapped," I answered feebly.

"That is not an answer, Dottor Preston."

He played the recording again, stopping at several words and demanding to know what Spezi or I meant, as if we were speaking in code, a common Mafia ploy. I tried to explain that the conversation meant what it said, but Mignini brushed my explanations aside. His face was flushed with a look of contempt. I knew why: he had expected me to lie, and I had met his expectation. I stammered out a question: Did he think we had committed a crime at the villa?

Mignini straightened up in his chair and, with a note of triumph in his voice, said, "*Yes.*"

I felt sick, and I had the sudden urge to relieve myself. I asked for the way to the bathroom. I returned a few minutes later, having failed to muster much composure. "I've told you the truth," I managed to croak. "What more can I say?"

Mignini waved his hand and was handed a legal tome. He placed it on his desk with the utmost delicacy, opened it, and, in a voice worthy of a funeral oration, began to read the text of the law. I heard that I was now "*indagato*" (an official suspect under investigation) for the crime of reticence and making false statements. He announced that the investigation would be suspended to allow me to leave Italy, but that it would be reinstated when the investigation of Spezi was concluded.

The secretary printed out a transcript. The two-and-a-half-hour interrogation had been edited down to two pages, which I amended and signed.

"May I keep this?" I asked.

"No. It is under seal."

Very stiffly, I picked up my *International Herald Tribune*, folded it under my arm, and turned to leave.

"If you ever decide to talk, Dottor Preston, we are here."

On rubbery legs I descended to the street, into a wintry drizzle.

I left Italy the next day. When I returned to my home in Maine, which stands on a bluff overlooking the gray Atlantic, and listened to the breakers on the rocks below and the seagulls calling above, I felt tears trickling down my face.



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*Mario Spezi and the author at one of the murder sites, outside Vicchio; crosses memorializing the murder victims are in the background*

But it was not over—not at all.

After I left, Spezi brought his car to a mechanic to get the broken door and radio fixed. The mechanic emerged holding a few thousand dollars' worth of electronics: a sophisticated GPS, microphone, and transmitter, which had been carefully attached to the old radio wires. Spezi filed a complaint, and a week or two later, his crappy radio was returned to him by GIDES.

For Spezi, the wrecking of his car was the last straw. He asked his lawyer to file a civil lawsuit against Chief Inspector Michele Giuttari. The suit was dated March 23. Spezi wrote the introductory statement himself, every word perfectly pitched to infuriate his foe:

> For more than a year, I have been the victim not just of half-baked police work, but of what could be said to be authentic violations of civil rights. This phenomenon—which pertains not just to me, but to many others—brings to mind the most dysfunctional societies, such as one might expect to find in Asia or Africa.

Spezi proceeded to deliver an uppercut to Giuttari's soft underbelly—his literary talent. In February, Giuttari had published his second book (there had also been several novels) on the Monster of Florence case, *The Monster: Anatomy of an Investigation*, in which he had taken several jabs at Spezi and others. In the lawsuit, Spezi quoted extract after extract, savaging Giuttari's theories, his logic, and his writing ability.

On Friday, April 7, eleven days before the publication of our book, a squad of policemen arrived at Spezi's apartment, lured him outside under false pretenses, arrested him, and hustled him into a car. He was driven to GIDES headquarters and taken from there to prison in Perugia. The Italian papers reported the charges against him: "calumny," "disturbing an essential public service," and "attempting to derail the investigation into the case of the Monster of Florence." A number of other people were named by the police as being involved in these crimes; I was one of them. The final charge, the papers claimed, was complicity in murder.

The day of the arrest, Mignini asked for and received a special dispensation to invoke a law that is normally used only for terrorists or Mafia dons who pose an imminent threat to the state. For a period of five days Spezi was denied access to his lawyers, kept in a tiny isolation cell under conditions of extreme deprivation, and grilled mercilessly. It was noted in the press that Spezi's treatment was harsher than that of Bernardo Provenzano, the Mafia "boss of bosses" captured in Sicily a few days later.

Spezi spent three weeks in Capanne, one of Italy's grimmest prisons. On April 29, a three-judge panel in Perugia surprised everyone by annulling his imprisonment and setting him free. It was a decisive slap in the face for Mignini and Giuttari. A week later, Florence hosted a demonstration for freedom of the press, and Spezi was the guest of honor. That same day our book hit the best-seller lists across Italy.

When Spezi returned home from prison, a crowd of journalists greeted him. "No, I'll not deal with the Monster affair anymore," he told one. "I'll write books, but not about that." Twenty-five years after that perfect summer Sunday in June when the bodies of two lovers were first found, Mario Spezi had finally declared his emancipation from the Monster of Florence.

Spezi's legal problems will likely drag on for years. He has been summoned back for another round of interrogation, and fresh charges are reportedly in the works. And yet, the tide may be turning. Mignini's fellow judges have severely criticized his conduct of the case, and, in early May, Giuttari himself became the target of an investigation, accused of falsifying evidence in the case. And so the investigation grinds on, voracious in its appetite for new victims.

People have often asked me if the Monster of Florence will ever be found. I once believed that Spezi and I could find the truth; now I am not so certain. Any crime novel, to be successful, must contain certain basic elements: there must be a motive; evidence; a trail of clues; and a process of discovery that leads, one way or another, to a conclusion. All novels, even *Crime and Punishment*, must come to an end.

But life, I have learned, is not so tidy. Here were murders without motive and a trail of clues apparently without end. The process of discovery has led investigators so deeply into a wilderness of falsehood that I doubt they will ever find their way out. Spezi and I used to laugh at their elaborate theories, but ours may not be much better. It wasn't based on what a good criminal investigation should be: the nitty-gritty of blood, hair, fibers, fingerprints, DNA, and reliable eyewitnesses. In the absence of solid forensic police work—which, in the Monster case, was shockingly deficient—any hypothesis will remain like something dreamed up by Hercule Poirot: a beautiful story in search of a confession. Only this is not a novel, and there won't be a confession—and without one, the Monster of Florence will never be found.

CHRISTINE PRESTON



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# INVENTING AL-ZARQAWI

*How a video-store clerk and small-time crook became America's nemesis in Iraq*

BY MARY ANNE WEAVER

On a cold and blustery evening in December 1989, Huthaifa Azzam, the teenage son of the legendary Jordanian-Palestinian mujahideen leader Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, went to the airport in Peshawar, Pakistan, to welcome a group of young men. All were new recruits, largely from Jordan, and they had come to fight in a fratricidal civil war in neighboring Afghanistan—an outgrowth of the CIA-financed jihad of the 1980s against the Soviet occupation there.

The men were scruffy, Huthaifa mused as he greeted them, and seemed hardly in battle-ready form. Some had just been released from prison; others were professors and sheikhs. None of them would prove worth remembering—except for a relatively short, squat man named Ahmad Fadhil Nazzal al-Khalaylah.

He would later rename himself Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Now one of the most wanted men in the world, for whose arrest the United States has offered a $25 million reward, al-Zarqawi is a notoriously enigmatic figure—a man who is everywhere yet nowhere. I went to Jordan earlier this year to find out who he really is, and to try to understand the role he now plays in the anti-American insurgency in Iraq. I also hoped to get a sense of how his generation—the foreign fighters now waging jihad in Iraq—compare with the foreign fighters who twenty years ago waged jihad in Afghanistan.

Huthaifa Azzam, whom I first met twenty years ago in Peshawar, bridges both worlds. He first went into battle at the age of fifteen, fighting against the Soviets in Afghanistan with his father and Osama bin Laden (to whom his father was a spiritual mentor); three years later, on that December night at the Peshawar airport, he met al-Zarqawi for the first time. The two Azzams and bin Laden had fought against the Soviets in the early days of the jihad; al-Zarqawi would fight in the war's second phase, after the Soviets had pulled out. Both Huthaifa Azzam and al-Zarqawi would eventually leave Afghanistan to

*Mary Anne Weaver is the author of* Pakistan: In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan *(2002).*

THOMAS DWORZAK/MAGNUM PHOTOS



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pursue two very different lives, but their paths would once again cross on the battlefields of jihad in Iraq, after the U.S. invasion of 2003.

A self-described jihadist—one who believes in struggle, or, more loosely, holy war—Azzam now lives in the Jordanian capital, Amman, where he is at work on a doctorate in classical Arabic literature, but he moves routinely between Jordan and Iraq. Seeing him again for the first time since he was a teenager, I was struck, as we chatted in a friend's drawing room, by how little he resembled the conventional image of a jihadist. He wore jeans, a light denim jacket, and an open-necked shirt, and his light-brown beard was neatly trimmed.

I asked Azzam if he knew who was funding al-Zarqawi's activities in Iraq.

He thought for a moment, and then replied without answering, "At the time of jihad, you can get vast amounts of money with a simple telephone call. I myself once collected three million dollars, which my father had arranged with a single call."

"A bank transfer?" I asked.

"No. I collected it on my motorbike.

"I was in Syria when the war in Iraq began," he went on. "People were arriving in droves; everyone wanted to go to Iraq to fight the Americans. I remember one guy who came and said he was too old to fight, but he gave the recruiters $200,000 in cash. 'Give it to the mujahideen,' was all he said."

He then told me about a young boy he had met in the early days of the war.

"He was from Saudi Arabia and had just turned thirteen. I noticed him in the crowd at a recruiting center near the Syrian-Iraqi frontier. People would come and register in the morning, then cross the border in the afternoon by bus. I first saw him at the registration desk. The recruiters refused to take him because he was so young, and he started to cry. I went back later in the day, and this same small guy had sneaked aboard the bus. When they discovered him, he started to shout *'Allahu Akhbar!'*—'God is most great!' They carried him off. He had $12,000 in his pocket—expense money his family had given him before he set off. 'Take it all,' he pleaded. 'Please, just let me do jihad.'"

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, barely forty and barely literate, a Bedouin from the Bani Hassan tribe, was until recently almost unknown outside his native Jordan. Then, on February 5, 2003, Secretary of State Colin Powell catapulted him onto the world stage. In his address to the United Nations making the case for war in Iraq, Powell identified al-Zarqawi—mistakenly, as it turned out—as the crucial link between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's regime. Since then, al-Zarqawi has become a leading figure in the insurgency in Iraq—and in November of last year, he also brought his jihadist revolution back home, as the architect of three lethal hotel bombings in Amman. His notoriety has grown with every atrocity he perpetrates, yet Western and Middle Eastern intelligence officials remain bedeviled by a simple question: Who is he? Is he al-Qaeda's point man in Iraq, as the Bush administration has argued repeatedly? Or is he, as a retired Israeli intelligence official told me not long ago, a staunch rival of bin Laden's, whose importance the United States has exaggerated in order to validate a link between al-Qaeda and pre-war Iraq, and to put a non-Iraqi face on a complex insurgency?

Early one morning, with a driver who would also serve as my interpreter, I set out from my hotel in Amman for the forty-five-minute drive to Zarqa—the industrial city where, in October 1966, al-Zarqawi was born into a large family, and from which he took his new name. As we sped along the highway, I tried to recall the often contradictory descriptions I had heard of the man. U.S. officials, for example, had often reported that in 2002, al-Zarqawi had had one of his legs amputated in Baghdad, a claim presumably meant to substantiate a link between al-Zarqawi and Saddam Hussein's regime. But he has since been seen walking in a videotape, clearly in possession of both his legs. Some Bush administration officials have called him a Jordanian-Palestinian, but in fact he comes from one of the Middle East's most influential Bedouin tribes. He has often been reported dead, only to rise again. In recent years, some have even suggested that he doesn't exist at all. The man is hard to distinguish from the myth.

One thing that brought me to Jordan was a desire to find out as much as possible about al-Zarqawi's relationship with Osama bin Laden. The two men have little in common: bin Laden, like most of his inner circle, is a university graduate from an influential family; al-Zarqawi, like many who follow him, is from an anonymous family (even though they are members of a significant tribe) and an anonymous town—a man who was fired from a job as a video-store clerk and whose background includes street gangs and, according to Jordanian intelligence officials, prison for sexual assault. He is a ruthless self-promoter who, U.S. officials claim, has killed or wounded thousands of people in the past three years—in suicide bombings, mass executions, and beheadings that have been videotaped. He has developed a mythic aura of invulnerability. But he is not the terrorist mastermind that he is often claimed to be.

Zarqa is a shambolic industrial city of some 850,000 people, a sprawl of factories, open fields, and dust. Twenty-five miles northeast of Amman, it is Jordan's third-largest city, and one of its most militant. For years it has been a magnet for Islamic activists. Along with the cities of Irbid and Salt, it has sent the largest number of Jordanian volunteers to fight abroad, first in Afghanistan and now in Iraq. Al-Zarqawi was born and raised in the al-Masoum neighborhood of Zarqa's old city, which sprawls somewhat haphazardly into the al-Ruseifah Palestinian refugee camp. (More than 60 percent of Jordan's 5.9 million inhabitants are Palestinian, as are some 80 percent of the inhabitants of old Zarqa.) When we entered the al-Masoum neighborhood,



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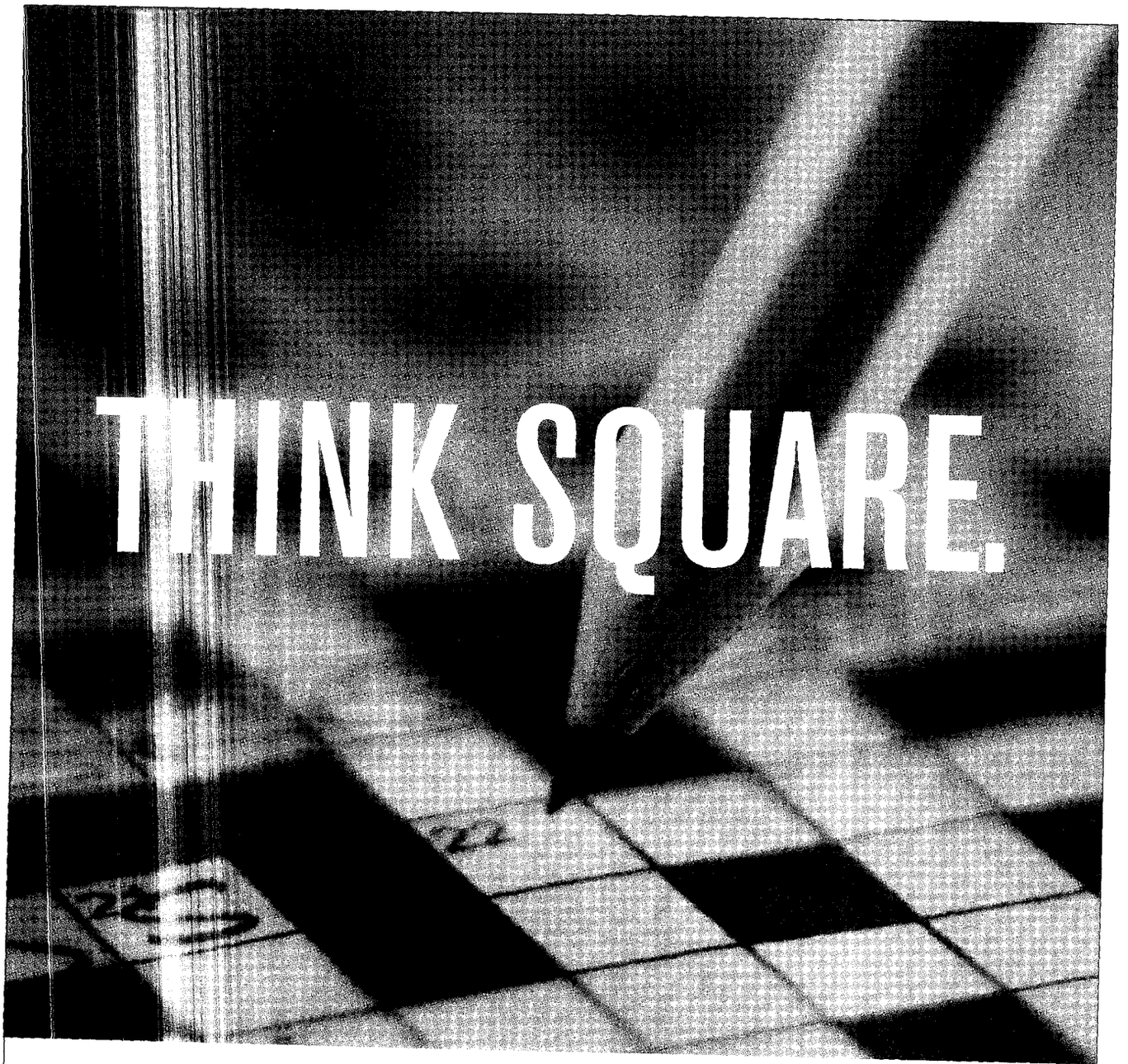


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the first thing that struck me was the sight of three "Afghan Arabs," as the Arab veterans of the jihad in Afghanistan are called. They were easily identifiable by the *shalwar kameezes* they wore—the long shirts and bloused trousers that are Afghanistan's national dress—and by their long, unkempt beards. Squatting outside a tiny neighborhood shop, they paid us little heed.

Al-Zarqawi keeps a home on a quiet lane in Zarqa. It's indistinguishable from its neighbors—a two-story white stucco building surrounded by a whitewashed wall. The house is now empty, a neighbor told us; al-Zarqawi's sisters, who still live in Zarqa, come by to look after it. At one point I glanced up at a window, which was slightly ajar. Someone abruptly slammed it shut.

I learned that the first of al-Zarqawi's two wives had lived in the house until recently. She was his cousin, whom he had married when he was twenty-two. They had four children, two boys and two girls. But not long before my visit, al-Zarqawi had sent an unknown man to drive them across the border to be with him in Iraq. His second wife, a Jordanian-Palestinian whom he had married in Afghanistan, and with whom he has a son, is reported to be with him in Iraq as well. Al-Zarqawi's mother, Omm Sayel, whom he adored—and who had traveled to Peshawar with him when he joined the jihad—died of leukemia in 2004; although he was the most wanted man in Jordan at the time of her death, al-Zarqawi returned to Zarqa in disguise to attend her funeral.

As I wandered with my driver around the al-Masoum neighborhood—visiting the al-Falah mosque, a tiny green-latticed structure where al-Zarqawi had been "returned" to Islam; searching for the cemetery that had been his favorite childhood playground (which we never found); and talking to al-Zarqawi's neighbors and friends—it became clear to me that although government officials in Amman had said that al-Zarqawi's popularity had plummeted since he had bombed the hotels there, Zarqa, at least, still appeared to be *his* town. We met three little boys riding their bicycles down an empty lane. When we asked for directions to al-Zarqawi's house, they told us where to go—and then, with large grins on their small faces, they flashed the victory sign. An old man who ran a local grocery looked at us knowingly when we walked in. "You're here for Zarqawi," he said, a statement of fact rather than a question. When we responded that we were, he insisted on giving us free soft drinks and potato chips.

Everyone I spoke with readily acknowledged that as a teenager al-Zarqawi had been a bully and a thug, a bootlegger and a heavy drinker, and even, allegedly, a pimp in Zarqa's underworld. He was disruptive, constantly involved in brawls. When he was fifteen (according to his police record, about which I had been briefed in Amman), he participated in a robbery of a relative's home, during which the relative was killed. Two years later, a year shy of graduation, he had dropped out of school. Then, in 1989, at the age of twenty-three, he traveled to Afghanistan.

It was the first time he had ever been out of Jordan, and for him it changed everything.

Salah al-Hami, a Jordanian of Palestinian descent, is al-Zarqawi's brother-in-law and one of his closest friends. We met him outside the garden of his Zarqa home. Dressed in a long blue robe, and with a red-and-white-checkered kaffiyeh hanging loosely from his head, he sported a full Islamist beard. He was polite but refused to be interviewed; after every interview he'd given, he said, he'd been arrested. But being arrested wasn't what bothered him most. What bothered him was that he had been misquoted repeatedly. As a journalist himself, he was fed up.

I told him that I simply wanted to verify a few dates and facts, and was interested in talking to him not about Iraq but about Afghanistan. He looked at me skeptically but agreed to chat as we stood at his garden gate. He and al-Zarqawi had met in Afghanistan, he said, during al-Zarqawi's first stay there, from 1989 to 1993. Al-Zarqawi

FROM LEFT: PHOTOS 1, 4: IGCD/HANDOUT/REUTERS/CORBIS; PHOTOS 2, 3, 5, 7: AP; PHOTO 6: SIPA/SIPA.



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was based initially in the border town of Khost, which, after both the Americans and the Soviets had left Afghanistan, was the site of intense and heavily contested battles between the mujahideen and the pro-Soviet Najibullah regime. At the beginning, al-Hami continued, al-Zarqawi had not been a fighter but had tried his hand at being a journalist. He had worked as a reporter for a small jihadist magazine, *Al-Bonian al Marsous*, while al-Hami was a correspondent for *Al-Jihad* magazine, which the mujahideen published in Peshawar. But then one day al-Hami stepped on a land mine and lost one of his legs.

"He was an ordinary guy, an ordinary fighter, and didn't really distinguish himself," Huthaifa Azzam said of al-Zarqawi's first time in Afghanistan. "He was a quiet guy who didn't talk much. But he was brave. Zarqawi doesn't know the meaning of fear. He's been wounded five or six times in Afghanistan and Iraq. He seems to intentionally place himself in the middle of the most dangerous situations. He fought in the battles of Khost and Kardez and, in April 1992, witnessed the liberation of Kabul by the mujahideen. A lot of Arabs were great commanders during those years. Zarqawi was not. He also wasn't very

It was during al-Zarqawi's visits to the hospital that he and al-Hami became close friends. I didn't ask al-Hami any personal questions, but I had been told earlier by another of al-Zarqawi's friends that one day in the hospital, al-Hami had spoken of the impossibility of ever having a family or a wife. "A one-legged man?" al-Hami reportedly said to al-Zarqawi. "Who would want to marry him?" In response al-Zarqawi offered him the hand of one of his sisters, and al-Hami agreed. So did the sister, and the two were married in Peshawar, in a lavish ceremony presided over by al-Zarqawi, whose father had died when he was young. The video of the reception was the only authenticated footage of al-Zarqawi ever publicly seen—until this April, when, for the first time, al-Zarqawi released a videotape of himself.

Al-Hami moved to Zarqa when he returned from Afghanistan. For a number of years now he has looked after al-Zarqawi's family, as well as his own, while his brother-in-law has traveled on a path that took him to prison, back to Afghanistan, then to Iran, northern Kurdistan, and now, finally, Iraq.

"If you want to understand who Zarqawi is," a former Jordanian intelligence official had told me earlier, "you've got to understand the four major turning points in his life: his first trip to Afghanistan; then the prison years [from 1993 to 1999]; then his return to Afghanistan, when he really came into his own; and then Iraq." He thought for a moment. "And, of course, the creativity of the Americans."

religious during that time. In fact, he'd only 'returned' to Islam three months before coming to Afghanistan. It was the Tablighi Jamaat [a proselytizing missionary group spread across the Muslim world] who convinced him—he had thirty-seven criminal cases against him by then—that it was time to cleanse himself."

A Jordanian counterterrorism official expanded on al-Zarqawi's time in Afghanistan for me. "His second time in Afghanistan was far more important than the first. But the first was significant in two ways. Zarqawi was young and impressionable; he'd never been out of Jordan before, and now, for the first time, he was interacting with doctrinaire Islamists from across the Muslim world, most of them brought to Afghanistan by the CIA. It was also his first exposure to al-Qaeda. He didn't meet bin Laden, of course, but he trained in one of his and Abdullah Azzam's camps: the Sada camp near the Afghan border inside Pakistan. He trained under Abu Hafs al-Masri." (The reference was to the nom de guerre of Mohammed Atef, an Egyptian who was bin Laden's military chief and, until he was killed in an American air strike in Afghanistan in November 2001, the No. 3 official in al-Qaeda.)

Abu Muntassir Bilah Muhammad is another jihadist who spent time fighting in Afghanistan and who would later become one of the co-founders of al-Zarqawi's first militant Islamist group. "Zarqawi arrived in Afghanistan as a zero," he told me, "a man with no career, just floundering about.



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He trained and fought and he came back to Jordan with ambitions and dreams: to carry the ideology of jihad. His first ambition was to reform Jordan, to set up an Islamist state. And there was a cachet involved in fighting in the jihad. Zarqawi returned to Jordan with newfound respect. It's not so much what Zarqawi did in the jihad—it's what the jihad did for him."

With an eye to the future, al-Zarqawi also used the jihad years to begin the process of cultivating friendships that would eventually lead to the formation of an international support network for his activities. "Particularly when he was in Khost, his primary friendships were with the Saudi fighters and others from the Gulf," Huthaifa Azzam told me. "Some of them were millionaires. There were even a couple of *billionaires*."

But perhaps as important as anything else, it was in Afghanistan that al-Zarqawi was introduced to Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (whose real name is Isam Muhammad Tahir al-Barqawi), a revered and militant Salafist cleric who had moved to Zarqa following the mass expulsion of Palestinians from Kuwait in the aftermath of the Gulf War. The Salafiya movement originated in Egypt, at the end of the nineteenth century, as a modernist Sunni reform movement, the aim of which was to let the Muslim world rise to the challenges posed by Western science and political thought. But since the 1920s, it has evolved into a severely puritanical school of absolutist thought that is markedly anti-Western and based on a literal interpretation of the Koran. Today's most radical Salafists, al-Zarqawi decidedly among them, regard any departure from their own rigid principles of Islam to be heretical; their particular hatred of Shiites—who broke with the Sunnis in 632 A.D. over the question of succession to the Prophet Muhammad, and who now constitute the majority in Iran and Iraq—is visceral. Over the years, al-Maqdisi embraced the most extreme school of Salafism, closely akin to the puritanical Wahhabism of Saudi Arabia, and in the early 1980s he published *The Creed of Abraham*, the single most important source of teachings for Salafist movements around the world. Al-Maqdisi would become al-Zarqawi's ideological mentor and most profound influence.

"It's not surprising that Zarqawi embraced Salafism," I was told by Jarret Brachman, the research director of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. "Jihadi Salafism is black and white—and so is everything that Zarqawi's ever done. When he met al-Maqdisi, he was drifting, trying to find an outlet, and very impressionable. His religious grounding, until then, was largely dependent upon whose influence he was under at the time. And since his father had died when he was young, he'd been seeking a father figure. Al-Maqdisi served both needs."

Al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi left Afghanistan in 1993 and returned to Jordan. They found it much changed. In their absence the Jordanians and the Israelis had begun negotiations that would lead to the signing of a peace treaty in 1994; the Palestinians had signed the Oslo Accords of 1993; and the Iraqis had lost the Gulf War. Unemployment was up sharply, the result of a privatization drive agreed to with the International Monetary Fund, and Jordanians were frustrated and angry. The Muslim Brotherhood—the kingdom's only viable opposition political force, which had agreed to support King Hussein in exchange for being allowed to participate in public and parliamentary life—appeared unable to cope with the rising disaffection. Small underground Islamist groups had therefore begun to appear, composed largely of men who had fought in the Afghan jihad, and who were guided by the increasingly loud voices of militant clerics who felt the Muslim Brotherhood had been co-opted by the state.

**"The Americans have been patently stupid," a former Jordanian intelligence official said. "They've blown Zarqawi so out of proportion that, of course, his prestige has grown." He paused, then said, "Your government is creating a self-fulfilling prophecy."**

After the two men returned home, al-Maqdisi toured the kingdom, preaching and recruiting, and al-Zarqawi sought out Abu Muntassir, who had already acquired a standing among Islamic militants in Jordan. "We talked a lot, over a couple of days," Abu Muntassir told me. "He was still pretty much a novice, but very willing, very able, and keen to learn about Islam. I was teaching geography at the time in a government school, so it was easy for me to teach Islam as well. After some time, Zarqawi asked me to work with him in an Islamic group; al-Maqdisi was already on board. The idea was there, but it had no leadership and no name. First we called it al-Tawhid, then changed the name to Bayat al-Imam [Allegiance to the Imam]. We were small but enthusiastic—a dozen or so men. Our primary objective, of course, was to overthrow the monarchy and establish an Islamic government."

Despite their enthusiasm, al-Zarqawi, al-Maqdisi, and Abu Muntassir did not appear to be natural revolutionaries. Their first operation was in Zarqa, in 1993, a former Jordanian intelligence official told me, when al-Zarqawi dispatched one of their men to a local cinema with orders to blow it up because it was showing pornographic films. But the hapless would-be bomber apparently got so distracted by what was happening on the screen that he forgot about his bomb. It exploded and blew off his legs.



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In another botched operation, al-Maqdisi (according to court testimony that he denied) gave al-Zarqawi seven grenades he had smuggled into Jordan, and al-Zarqawi hid them in the cellar of his family's home. Al-Maqdisi was already under surveillance by Jordan's intelligence service by that time, because of his growing popularity. The grenades were quickly discovered, and the two men, along with a number of their followers, found themselves for the first time before a state security court. Al-Zarqawi told the court that he had found the grenades while walking down the street. The judges were not amused. They convicted him and al-Maqdisi of possessing illegal weapons and belonging to a banned organization. In 1994, al-Zarqawi was sentenced to fifteen years in prison. He would flourish there.

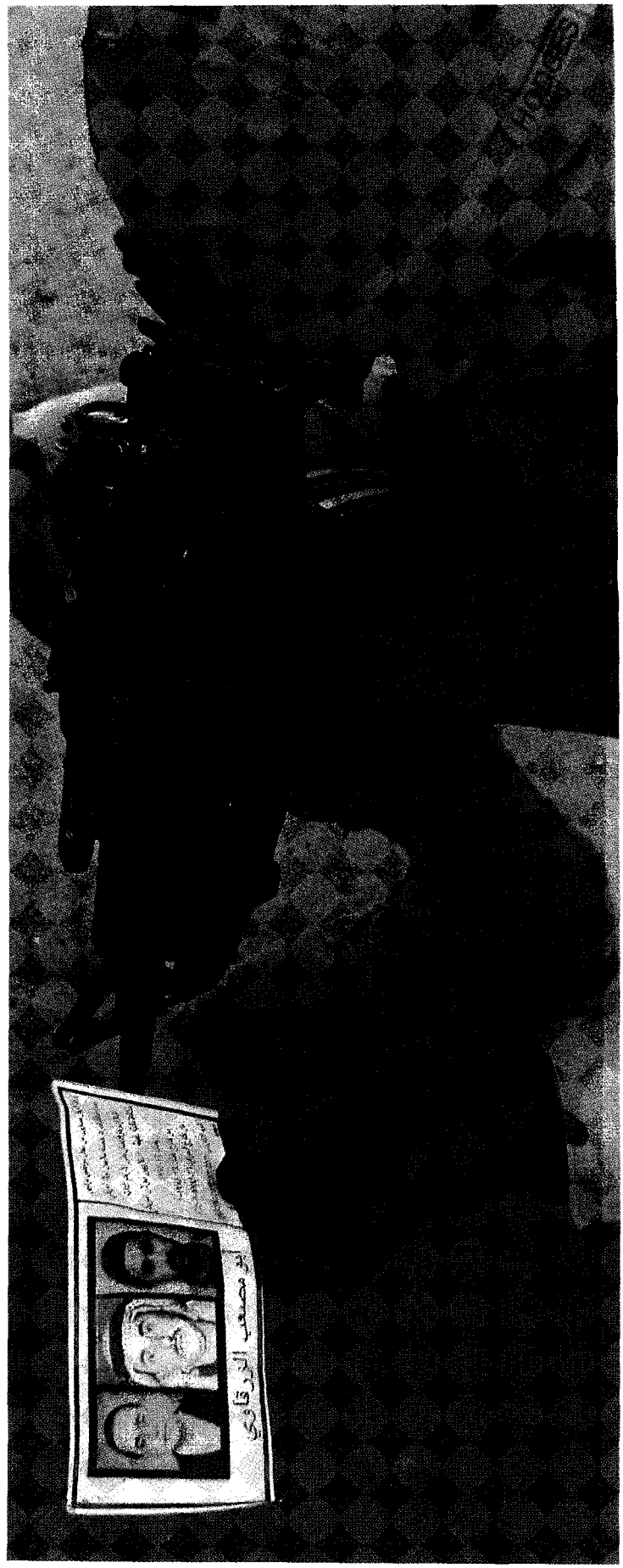
Swaqa prison sits on the southern desert's edge, sixty miles south of Amman, and its political prisoners, both Islamist and secular, are housed in four wings. Al-Zarqawi embraced prison life in the extreme—as he appears to embrace everything. According to fellow inmates of his with whom I spoke, his primary obsessions were recruiting other prisoners to his cause, building his body, and, under the tutelage of al-Maqdisi, memorizing the 6,236 verses of the Koran. He was stern, tough, and unrelenting on anything that he considered to be an infraction of his rules, yet he was often seen in the prison courtyard crying as he read the Koran.

He was fastidious about his appearance in prison—his beard and moustache were always cosmetically groomed—and he wore only Afghan dress: the *shalwar kameez* and a rolled-brim, woolen Pashtun cap. One former inmate who served time with him told me that al-Zarqawi sauntered through the prison ward like a "peacock." Islamists flocked to him. He attracted recruits; some joined him out of fascination, others out of curiosity, and still others out of fear. In a short time, he had organized prison life at Swaqa like a gang leader.

"Zarqawi was the muscle, and al-Maqdisi the thinker," Abdullah Abu Rumman, a journalist and editor who had been in prison with al-Zarqawi, told me one morning over tea. (Abu Rumman had been held for three months in 1996, for a series of articles he wrote that were considered unflattering toward King Hussein.) "Zarqawi basically controlled the prison ward," Abu Rumman went on. "He decided who would cook, who would do the laundry, who would lead the readings of the Koran. He was extremely protective of his followers, and extremely tough with prisoners outside his group. He didn't trust them. He considered them infidels."

There were also confrontations and altercations with prison officials and guards. Whether al-Zarqawi was ever tortured is a matter of dispute: some of his followers say he was; Jordanian government officials, perhaps predictably, say he was not.

When Abu Rumman entered Swaqa, al-Zarqawi was in isolation following a prison brawl. "It was quite extraordinary," Abu Rumman said. "My first glimpse of Zarqawi was when he was released. He returned to the ward as a hero



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surrounded by his own bodyguards. Everyone began to shout: '*Allahu Akhbar!*' By that time Zarqawi was already called the 'emir,' or 'prince.' He had an uncanny ability to control, almost to hypnotize; he could order his followers to do things just by moving his eyes."

Al-Zarqawi controlled not only his followers but also the ward's television sets. No one could really *watch* them, however, since he had covered them with black cloth to prevent the display of female forms. All the inmates could do was listen—and only to the evening news at eight o'clock. "Zarqawi and his followers had scant interest in political affairs, except for what was happening in Algeria and Afghanistan," Abu Rumman said. "At the pre-arranged hour, they'd all rush into the television room. When shouts of '*Allahu Akhbar!*' reverberated through the ward, we all knew that the Taliban was meeting with success."

Al-Zarqawi and al-Maqdisi's Bayat al-Imam continued to grow, both inside prison and in Zarqa, Irbid, and Salt. Al-Zarqawi used his Bedouin credentials to good effect, as his own profile began to ascend. His Bani Hassan tribe is one of the Middle East's most prominent, and its tribal lands spill across the borders dividing Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. In Jordan, many of its members hold high-level positions in the government, the army, and the intelligence service. As a result, many of the prisoners, and many of Swaqa's guards, deferred to al-Zarqawi. Al-Maqdisi, a Palestinian, was also accorded special treatment, but largely as a result of his links to al-Zarqawi and the Bani Hassan. Between mentor and pupil, the roles had subtly begun to shift inside the prison walls.

As al-Zarqawi recruited, al-Maqdisi preached, and using the Internet, they broadcast their message of jihad across three continents. Sheikh Abu Qatada, a Palestinian cleric who is one of Salafism's leading ideologues, was also one of al-Maqdisi's closest friends. The two men had been together in Kuwait, then in Zarqa, then Afghanistan. Abu Qatada, after leaving Afghanistan, had moved to London (where he is currently under arrest, awaiting possible deportation to Jordan). Now al-Maqdisi's religious tracts were smuggled out of Swaqa by prisoners' wives and mothers, with help from sympathetic prison guards, and they were sent on to Abu Qatada, who posted them on the Web sites of Salafists and jihadists throughout Europe, the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf.

Al-Zarqawi's own religious views became increasingly severe, as did his intolerance of anyone he believed to be an infidel. Al-Maqdisi sometimes angrily disagreed with him. (It was the first portent of what lay ahead. Al-Zarqawi began to eclipse his mentor in prison, and would continue to do so over the coming years, but their final, and public, break did not occur until November 2005, when, on Al-Jazeera, al-Maqdisi criticized his former protégé for the hotel bombings in Amman.) Nevertheless, despite their prison disagreements, al-Maqdisi, from time to time, permitted al-Zarqawi to draft his own religious tracts. Abu Muntassir (who would also later break with al-Zarqawi) was his editor. Al-Zarqawi was "a terrible writer," he told me, "and didn't really understand the Koran. He had learned it by rote." Even today, al-Zarqawi cannot write a fatwa, Abu Muntassir said, and as a result has had to set up his own fatwa committee in Iraq.

In 1998, three or four of al-Zarqawi's tracts were posted on the Internet, after heavy editing. Soon they came to the attention of Osama bin Laden, in Afghanistan. It was the first time he had ever heard of al-Zarqawi.

In May of the following year, Jordan's King Abdullah II—newly enthroned after the death of his father, King Hussein—declared a general amnesty, and al-Zarqawi was released from Swaqa. He had made effective use of his time there. As he had done nearly a decade before—when he befriended wealthy Saudi jihadists in Khost—he had expanded his reach and his appeal during his prison years. Among the fellow inmates he had converted to Salafism and brought into the Bayat al-Imam were a substantial number of prisoners from Iraq.

After returning for a few months to Zarqa, al-Zarqawi left again and traveled to Pakistan. He may or may not have known that Jordan was about to declare him a suspect in a series of foiled terrorist attacks intended for New Year's Eve of 1999. The plan, which became known as the "Millennium Plot," involved the bombing of Christian

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landmarks and other tourist sites, along with the Radisson Hotel in Amman. Had it succeeded, it would have been al-Zarqawi's first involvement in a major terrorist attack.

Whatever the case, al-Zarqawi planned ahead before he left for Pakistan. He arrived bearing a letter of introduction from Abu Kutaiba al-Urduni, one of Jordan's most significant leaders during the jihad in Afghanistan. Al-Urduni had been a key deputy to—and the chief recruiter inside Jordan for—Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, Huthaifa Azzam's father. (Having worked for years in Peshawar as the leader of the Service Office, or the Maktab al-Khidmat, the sheikh had become *the* pivotal figure in the Pan-Islamic recruitment of volunteers for the jihad.) Al-Urduni's letter was the first endorsement that al-Zarqawi had received from such a senior figure—and the letter was addressed to Osama bin Laden.

In December 1999, al-Zarqawi crossed the border into Afghanistan, and later that month he and bin Laden met at the Government Guest House in the southern city of Kandahar, the de facto capital of the ruling Taliban. As they sat facing each other across the receiving room, a former Israeli intelligence official told me, "it was loathing at first sight."

According to several different accounts of the meeting, bin Laden distrusted and disliked al-Zarqawi immediately. He suspected that the group of Jordanian prisoners with whom al-Zarqawi had been granted amnesty earlier in the year had been infiltrated by Jordanian intelligence; something similar had occurred not long before with a Jordanian jihadist cell that had come to Afghanistan. Bin Laden also disliked al-Zarqawi's swagger and the green tattoos on his left hand, which he reportedly considered un-Islamic. Al-Zarqawi came across to bin Laden as aggressively ambitious, abrasive, and overbearing. His hatred of Shiites also seemed to bin Laden to be potentially divisive—which, of course, it was. (Bin Laden's mother, to whom he remains close, is a Shiite, from the Alawites of Syria.)

Al-Zarqawi would not recant, even in the presence of the legendary head of al-Qaeda. "Shiites should be executed," he reportedly declared. He also took exception to bin Laden's providing Arab fighters to the Taliban, the fundamentalist student militia that, although now in power, was still battling the Northern Alliance, which controlled some 10 percent of Afghanistan. Muslim killing Muslim was un-Islamic, al-Zarqawi is reported to have said.

Unaccustomed to such direct criticism, the leader of al-Qaeda was aghast.

Had Saif al-Adel—now bin Laden's military chief—not intervened, history might be written very differently.

A former Egyptian army colonel who had trained in special operations, al-Adel was then al-Qaeda's chief of security and a prominent voice in an emerging debate gripping the militant Islamist world. Who should the primary target be—the "near enemy" (the Muslim world's "un-Islamic" regimes) or the "far enemy" (primarily Israel and the United States)? Al-Zarqawi was a near-enemy advocate, and although his obsession remained the overthrow of the Jordanian monarchy, he had expanded his horizons slightly during his prison years and had now begun to focus on the area known as al-Sham, or the Levant, which includes Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and historic Palestine. As an Egyptian who had attempted to overthrow his own country's army-backed regime, al-Adel saw merit in al-Zarqawi's views. Thus, after a good deal of debate within al-Qaeda, it was agreed that al-Zarqawi would be given $5,000 or so in "seed money" to set up his own training camp outside the western Afghan city of Herat, near the Iranian border. It was about as far away as he could be from bin Laden.

Saif al-Adel was designated the middleman.

In early 2000, with a dozen or so followers who had arrived from Peshawar and Amman, al-Zarqawi set out for the western desert encircling Herat. His goal: to build an army that he could export to anywhere in the world. Al-Adel paid monthly visits to al-Zarqawi's training camp; later, on his Web site, he would write that he was amazed at what he saw there. The number of al-Zarqawi's fighters multiplied from dozens to hundreds during the following year, and by the time the forces evacuated their camp, prior to the U.S. air strikes of October 2001, the fighters and their families numbered some 2,000 to 3,000. According to al-Adel, the wives of al-Zarqawi's followers served lavish Levantine cuisine in the camp.

**Three times during the past year, Jordanian intelligence gave the United States information on al-Zarqawi's whereabouts—first in Mosul, then in Ramadi. Each time, the Americans arrived too late.**

It was in Herat that al-Zarqawi formed the militant organization Jund al-Sham, or Soldiers of the Levant. His key operational lieutenants were mainly Syrians—most of whom had fought in the Afghan jihad, and many of whom belonged to their country's banned Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood's exiled leadership, which is largely based in Europe, was immensely important in recruiting for the Herat camp, although whether it also supplied funds remains under debate. What is clear, however, is that al-Zarqawi's closest aide, a Syrian from the city of Hama named Sulayman Khalid Darwish—or Abu al-Ghadiyah—was considered to be, until his death last summer on the Iraqi-Syrian frontier, one of al-Zarqawi's most likely successors.

I asked a high-level Jordanian intelligence official how important the Herat camp was.



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"For Zarqawi, it was the turning point," he replied. "Herat was the beginning of what he is now. He had command responsibilities for the first time; he had a battle plan. And even though he and bin Laden never got on, he was important to them. Herat was the only training camp in Afghanistan that was actively recruiting volunteers specifically from the Sham. Zarqawi, for his part, is very conceited and likes to show off. In Herat, he called himself the 'Emir of Sham'!"

At least five times, in 2000 and 2001, bin Laden called al-Zarqawi to come to Kandahar and pay *bayat*—take an oath of allegiance—to him. Each time, al-Zarqawi refused. Under no circumstances did he want to become involved in the battle between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban. He also did not believe that either bin Laden or the Taliban was serious enough about jihad.

When the United States launched its air war inside Afghanistan, on October 7, 2001, al-Zarqawi joined forces with al-Qaeda and the Taliban for the first time. He and his Jund al-Sham fought in and around Herat and Kandahar. Al-Zarqawi was wounded in an American air strike—not in the leg, as U.S. officials claimed for two years, but in the chest, when the ceiling of the building in which he was operating collapsed on him. Neither did he join Osama bin Laden in the eastern mountains of Tora Bora, as U.S. officials have also said. Bin Laden took only his most trusted fighters to Tora Bora, and al-Zarqawi was not one of them.

In December 2001, accompanied by some 300 fighters from Jund al-Sham, al-Zarqawi left Afghanistan once again, and entered Iran.

**In December 1999, al-Zarqawi crossed the border into Afghanistan, and later that month he and bin Laden met. As they sat and faced each other across the receiving room, a former intelligence official told me, "it was loathing at first sight."**

During the next fourteen months, al-Zarqawi based himself primarily in Iran and in the autonomous area of Kurdistan, in northern Iraq, traveling from time to time to Syria and to the Ayn al-Hilwah Palestinian refugee camp in the south of Lebanon—a camp that, according to the former Jordanian intelligence official, has become his main recruiting ground. More often, however, al-Zarqawi traveled to the Sunni Triangle of Iraq. He expanded his network, recruited and trained new fighters, and set up bases, safe houses, and military training camps. In Iran, he was reunited with Saif al-Adel—who encouraged him to go to Iraq and provided contacts there—and for a time, al-Zarqawi stayed at a farm belonging to the fiercely anti-American Afghan jihad leader Gulbaddin Hekmatyar. In Kurdistan he lived and worked with the separatist militant Islamist group Ansar al-Islam, ironically in an area protected as part of the "no-fly" zone imposed on Saddam Hussein by Washington.

One can only imagine how astonished al-Zarqawi must have been when Colin Powell named him as the crucial link between al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's regime. He was not even officially a part of al-Qaeda, and ever since he had left Afghanistan, his links had been not to Iraq but to Iran.

"We know Zarqawi better than he knows himself," the high-level Jordanian intelligence official said. "And I can assure you that he never had any links to Saddam. Iran is quite a different matter. The Iranians have a policy: they want to control Iraq. And part of this policy has been to support Zarqawi, tactically but not strategically."

"Such as?" I asked.

"In the beginning they gave him automatic weapons, uniforms, military equipment, when he was with the army of Ansar al-Islam. Now they essentially just turn a blind eye to his activities, and to those of al-Qaeda generally. The Iranians see Iraq as a fight against the Americans, and overall, they'll get rid of Zarqawi and all of his people once the Americans are out."

In the summer of 2003, three months after the American invasion, al-Zarqawi moved to the Sunni areas of Iraq. He became infamous almost at once. On August 7, he allegedly carried out a car-bomb attack at the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad. Twelve days later, he was linked to the bombing of the United Nations headquarters, in which twenty-two people died. And on August 29, in what was then the deadliest attack of the war, he engineered the killing of over a hundred people, including a revered cleric, the Ayatollah Muhammad Baqr al-Hakim, in a car bombing outside Shia Islam's holy shrine in Najaf. The suicide bomber in that attack was Yassin Jarad, from Zarqa. He was al-Zarqawi's father-in-law.

"Even then—and even more so now—Zarqawi was not the main force in the insurgency," the former Jordanian intelligence official, who has studied al-Zarqawi for a decade, told me. "To establish himself, he carried out the Muhammad Hakim operation, and the attack against the UN. Both of them gained a lot of support for him—with the tribes, with Saddam's army and other remnants of his regime. They made Zarqawi the *symbol* of the resistance in Iraq, but not the leader. And he never has been."

He continued, "The Americans have been patently stupid in all of this. They've blown Zarqawi so out of proportion that, of course, his prestige has grown. And as a result, sleeper cells from all over Europe are coming to join him now." He paused for a moment, then said, "Your government is creating a self-fulfilling prophecy."



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Western and Israeli diplomats to whom I spoke share this view—and this past April, *The Washington Post* reported on Pentagon documents that detailed a U.S. military propaganda campaign to inflate al-Zarqawi's importance. Then, the following month, the military appeared to attempt to reverse field and portray al-Zarqawi as an incompetent who could not even handle a gun. But by then his image in the Muslim world was set.

Of course, no one has done more to cultivate that image than al-Zarqawi himself. He committed some of the deadliest attacks in Iraq, though they still represent only some 10 percent of the country's total number of attacks. In May 2004, he inaugurated his notorious wave of hostage beheadings; he also specialized in suicide and truck bombings of Shiite shrines and mosques, largely in Shiite neighborhoods. His primary aim was to provoke a civil war. "If we succeed in dragging [the Shia] into a sectarian war," he purportedly wrote in a letter intercepted by U.S. forces and released in February 2004, "this will awaken the sleepy Sunnis who are fearful of destruction and death at the hands of the Shia." (The authenticity of the letter came into question almost immediately.)

Al-Zarqawi courted chaos so that Iraq would provide him another failed state to operate in after the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan. He became best known for his videotaped beheadings. One after the other they appeared on jihadist Web sites, always the same. In the background was the trademark black banner of al-Zarqawi's newest group: al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad, or Monotheism and Jihad. In the foreground, a blindfolded hostage, kneeling and pleading for his life, was dressed in an orange jumpsuit resembling those worn by the detainees at Guantánamo Bay. Al-Zarqawi's first victim was a Pennsylvania engineer named Nicholas Berg. In the video, five hooded men, dressed in black, stand behind Berg. After a recitation, one of the men pulls a long knife from his shirt, steps forward, and slices off Berg's head. The U.S. military quickly announced that the executioner was al-Zarqawi himself, and although no one doubts that he planned the operation, questions soon arose: the figure seems taller than al-Zarqawi, and he uses his right hand to wield the knife. Al-Zarqawi is said to be left-handed.

Regardless of his growing notoriety in Iraq, al-Zarqawi has never lost sight of his ultimate goal: the overthrow of the Jordanian monarchy. His efforts to foment unrest in Jordan have included the 2002 assassination of the U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley, and, on a far larger scale, a disrupted plot in 2004 to bomb the headquarters of the Jordanian intelligence services—a scheme that, according to Jordanian officials, would have entailed the use of trucks packed with enough chemicals and explosives to kill some 80,000 people. Once it was uncovered, al-Zarqawi immediately accepted responsibility for the plot, although he denied that chemical weapons would have been involved.

Later that year, in October 2004, after resisting for nearly five years, al-Zarqawi finally paid *bayat* to Osama bin Laden—but only after eight months of often stormy negotiations. After doing so he proclaimed himself to be the "Emir of al-Qaeda's Operations in the Land of Mesopotamia," a title that subordinated him to bin Laden but at the same time placed him firmly on the global stage. One explanation for this coming together of these two former

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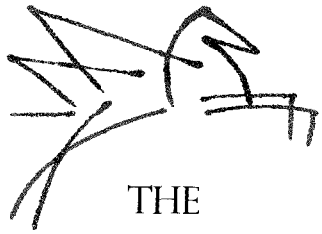

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antagonists was simple: al-Zarqawi profited from the al-Qaeda franchise, and bin Laden needed a presence in Iraq. Another explanation is more complex: bin Laden laid claim to al-Zarqawi in the hopes of forestalling his emergence as the single most important terrorist figure in the world, and al-Zarqawi accepted bin Laden's endorsement to augment his credibility and to strengthen his grip on the Iraqi tribes. Both explanations are true.

It was a pragmatic alliance, but tenuous from the start.

"From the beginning, Zarqawi has wanted to be independent, and he will continue to be," Oraib Rantawi, the director of the Al-Quds Center for Political Studies in Amman, said to me. "Yes, he's gained stature through this alliance, but he only swore *bayat* after all this time because of growing pressure from Iraqis who were members of al-Qaeda. And even then he signed with conditions—that he would maintain control over Jund al-Sham and al-Tawhid, and that he would exert operational autonomy. His suicide bombings of the hotels in Amman"—in which some sixty civilians died, many of them while attending a wedding celebration—"was a huge tactical mistake. My understanding is that bin Laden was furious about it."

The attacks, which represented an expansion of al-Zarqawi's sophistication and reach, also showed his growing independence from the al-Qaeda chief. They came only thirteen months after he had sworn *bayat*. The alliance had already begun to fray.

The signs were visible as early as the summer of 2005. In a letter purportedly sent to al-Zarqawi in July from Ayman al-Zawahiri, the Egyptian surgeon who is bin Laden's designated heir, al-Zarqawi was chided about his tactics in Iraq. And although some experts have cast doubt on the letter's authenticity (it was released by the office of the U.S. Director of National Intelligence), few would dispute its message: namely, that al-Zarqawi's hostage beheadings, his mass slaughter of Shiites, and his assaults on their mosques were all having a negative effect on Muslim opinion—both of him and, by extension, of al-Qaeda—around the world. In one admonition, al-Zawahiri allegedly advised al-Zarqawi that a captive can be killed as easily by a bullet as by a knife.

During my time in Jordan, I asked a number of officials what they considered to be the most curious aspect of the relationship between the U.S. and al-Zarqawi, other than the fact that the Bush administration had inflated him.

One of them said, "The six times you could have killed Zarqawi, and you didn't."

When Powell addressed the United Nations, he discussed the Ansar al-Islam camp near Khurmal, in northern Kurdistan, which he claimed was producing ricin and where al-Zarqawi was then based. On at least three occasions, between mid-2002 and the invasion of Iraq the following March, the Pentagon presented plans to the White House to destroy the Khurmal camp, according to a report published by *The Wall Street Journal* in October 2004. The White House either declined or simply ignored the request.

More recently, three times during the past year, the Jordanian intelligence service, which has a close liaison relationship with the CIA, provided the United States with information on al-Zarqawi's whereabouts—first in Mosul, then in Ramadi. Each time, the Americans arrived too late.

After I returned from Jordan, in mid-March, what had appeared to be a growing challenge to al-Zarqawi from local Sunni insurgent groups, which had reportedly expelled hundreds of his fighters from the troubled western province of al-Anbar alone, seemed to have been put aside. The upsurge in Sunni-Shiite killings, as the result of the February bombing of Samarra's Askariya Shrine (one of Shia Islam's holiest sites), had led, at least for the moment, to a newfound unity between al-Zarqawi and the Sunni insurgency. Then, in early April, Huthaifa Azzam announced that the "Iraqi resistance's high command" had stripped al-Zarqawi of his political role and relegated him to military operations. It was the second time that al-Zarqawi's profile had seemingly been lowered—or that he had lowered it—this year. The first had come in January, when it was announced that al-Qaeda in Iraq had joined five other Sunni insurgent groups to form a coalition called the Mujahideen Shura Council. By early May, U.S. counterterrorism analysts were still puzzling over what the two events meant and what changes they could portend.

As they debated, al-Zarqawi sprang to life again, in a video posted on the Internet on April 24. It was the first time he had appeared in a jihadist videotape, and the first time he had shown his face. Dressed in black fatigues and a black cap, he had ammunition pouches strapped across his chest. He appeared fit, if overweight, as he posed in the desert firing an automatic weapon and as he sat with a group of masked aides, apparently plotting strategy. It seemed an extremely risky thing for him to do, and yet it also appeared to be very deliberate. It was a useful tool for recruitment, intending to show al-Zarqawi as both a flamboyant fighter and a pensive strategist. More important than anything else, however, it was meant to show the world that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi—the brash young man who had come of age in the rough-and-tumble of Zarqa—remained relevant.

Before leaving Amman, I had asked the high-level Jordanian intelligence official with whom I met whether al-Zarqawi, in his view, was a potential challenger to Osama bin Laden.

"Not at all," he replied. "Zarqawi had the ambition to become what he has, but whatever happens, even if he becomes the most popular figure in Iraq, he can never go against the symbolism that bin Laden represents. If Zarqawi is captured or killed tomorrow, the Iraqi insurgency will go on. There is no such thing as 'Zarqawism.' What Zarqawi is will die with him. Bin Laden, on the other hand, is an ideological thinker. He *created* the concept of al-Qaeda and all of its offshoots. He feels he's achieved his goal." He paused for a moment, then said, "Osama bin Laden is like Karl Marx. Both created an ideology. Marxism still flourished well after Marx's death. And whether bin Laden is killed, or simply dies of natural causes, al-Qaedaism will survive him."



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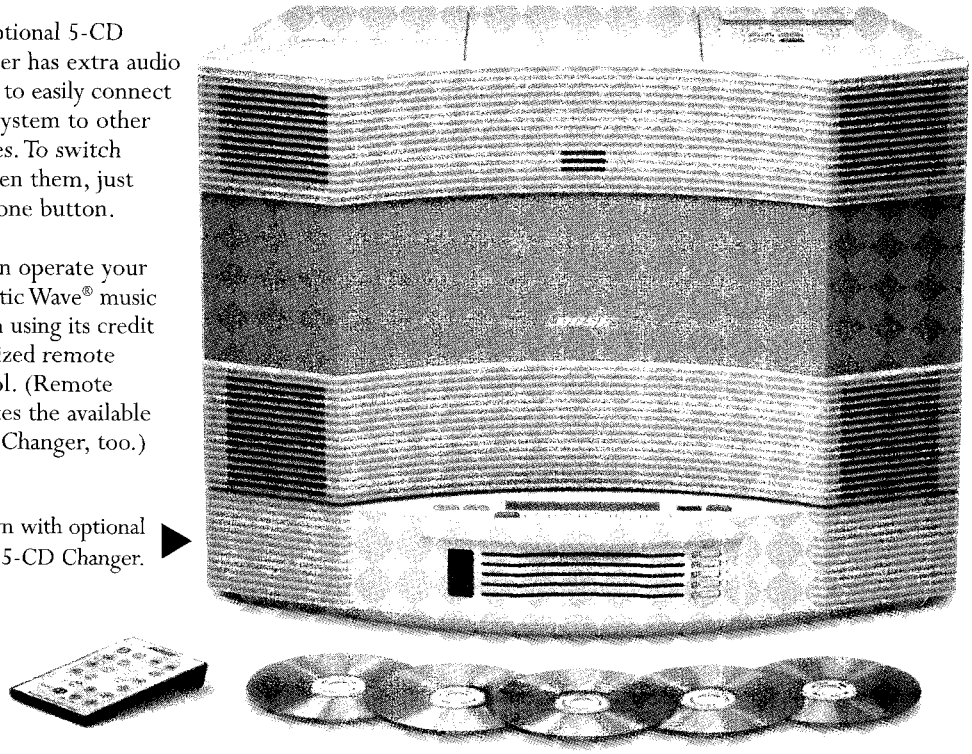

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# JIHAD 2.0

*With the loss of training camps in Afghanistan, terrorists have turned to the Internet to find and train recruits. The story of one pioneer of this effort—the enigmatic "Irhabi 007"—shows how*

BY NADYA LABI

On May 11, 2004, a link to a five-and-a-half-minute video appeared on the Web site Muntada al-Ansar al-Islami, or the Forum of the Islamic Supporters. Announced with the words SHEIKH ABU MUSAB AL-ZARQAWI SLAUGHTERS AN AMERICAN INFIDEL, the video featured the now-notorious beheading of the American contractor Nicholas Berg. Initially sent from a computer that was probably somewhere in Iraq, the video was copied onto Internet sites and within twenty-four hours had been downloaded half a million times. With the slash of a knife, al-Zarqawi had pulled off the most successful online terrorist PR campaign ever.

It was no small feat. A terrorist intent on eluding capture can't simply walk into an Internet café in Baghdad or Fallujah and broadcast a video of his exploits to the world. Once that video is posted online and recognized for what it is, the site carrying it may get shut down by government officials, private hackers, or host servers hoping to avoid public outcry. And even if none of those things happens immediately, the site may receive so much traffic all at once that it simply crashes. Al-Zarqawi's success was possible because he had anticipated the importance of the Internet—an increasingly important weapon in the global terrorist arsenal. Which is where "Irhabi 007" comes in.

*Nadya Labi is a writer based in New York City. She has previously worked as a senior editor at* Legal Affairs *and as a staff writer at* Time.

Irhabi 007—presumed to be a man, because *irhabi* in Arabic means "terrorist" and refers to a single male—was first observed in 2003, on two jihadi Web sites. The sites focused on how to commit cyber-crimes, and one of them also disseminated pages of a "jihad encyclopedia"—a compendium of violence collected by al-Qaeda in Afghanistan that included detailed instructions on how to use agricultural chemicals as weapons of mass destruction. "I don't know how old he was, or whether he was male or female, but you got the impression of a teenager," one analyst told me. "Occasionally he used Arabic, but not much, which suggested he might be using a machine translator. He started out as a bit of a loudmouth, one of those cheerleaders who would go around cheerleading global terrorism."

Those two sites disappeared in 2004, and Irhabi relocated to al-Ansar, the site where the Berg video was posted. In his early days there Irhabi's skill set seemed limited. He posted links to run-of-the-mill articles in English and Arabic, and translated the English headlines into Arabic. An article about al-Qaeda's claim of responsibility for the Madrid train bombings was punctuated with a smiley face; the downing of a U.S. helicopter in Baghdad merited the invocation "God is Great!" Irhabi's enthusiasm, as measured by the



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*Imagery from jihadi Web sites*

abundance of his posts, earned him the computer-generated title of "distinguished member."

When Irhabi first turned up on the site, a member of the forum suspected that he was accessing Web pages with his personal IP address—a rookie mistake—and warned him to stop. (Every computer on the Internet bears a numerical code, known as an Internet Protocol, or IP, that acts as an "address" for packets of data traveling to and from the host server. An IP identifies the location of a computer, and by extension its owner, just as surely as a return address on an envelope identifies the home of a sender.) Irhabi took the advice and learned fast. Within months he was dispensing advice himself: he provided security tips on how to avoid detection online; distributed anonymizing software that masks a computer's actual IP address; and emphasized the importance of using a proxy server, which acts as an intermediary between a user and a host server, and can also be used to mask the user's identity.

Right from the start Irhabi was determined to make himself useful. On the al-Ansar site he posted maps of Israel, Navy SEAL guides on sniper training, CIA manuals on making explosives, and other intelligence that he'd found online, especially if it concerned Iraq. American soldiers stationed in the country had begun writing blogs about their lives there and were posting photos and videos online. Irhabi wanted to mine those blogs for information about U.S. forces in the country—and he realized how effectively that information could be incorporated into the homemade videos that are the lifeblood of online jihadi forums. "I'm looking for soldier footages from within U.S. bases etc.," he wrote in March 2004. "That's the fish I want to catch." (The U.S. military eventually took measures to protect some of the information.) The next month, he pointed a member toward instructions on how to make smoke bombs, and he illegally distributed software on al-Ansar that included tools for hacking, noting that the tools were "quite complex" for "Newbies." His efforts did not go unrecognized. "The hero," one member gushed about Irhabi in a typical post. "God salutes you." To which Irhabi responded, "Hero? I am only half a man now."

Soon Irhabi's reach and reputation extended far beyond the al-Ansar community. In the fall of 2005, the Terrorism Research Center—an independent organization, based just outside Washington, D.C., in northern Virginia, whose far-flung experts provide intelligence on global security to governments and private companies—published a report on Irhabi that described him as "heavily involved in maintaining al-Qaeda's online presence." The TRC reported that Irhabi had posted videos of beheadings and attacks by insurgent groups in Iraq, as well as clips released by the al-Sahab foundation, considered by many analysts to be al-Qaeda's production company. It added that Irhabi had registered one of his Web sites under the name, phone number, and address of an American lieutenant deployed in Iraq.

Irhabi was part of a new and growing terrorist vanguard. After 9/11 and the American bombing campaign in Afghanistan, al-Qaeda lost much of its infrastructure. No longer able to recruit in plain sight, its strategists recognized that the Internet could become a vast global recruiting ground—in effect, a new, borderless Afghanistan. The shift of emphasis to online activity, the TRC report asserted, gave al-Qaeda a powerful new means of exercising "command and control over its amorphous network." And al-Qaeda also realized that in jihadi chat rooms it could find precisely what it most needed to maintain its ranks of recruits and suicide bombers: impressionable young Muslim men (and some women), many of them second-generation immigrants living in the United States and Europe.

COURTESY OF A. AARON WEISBURD



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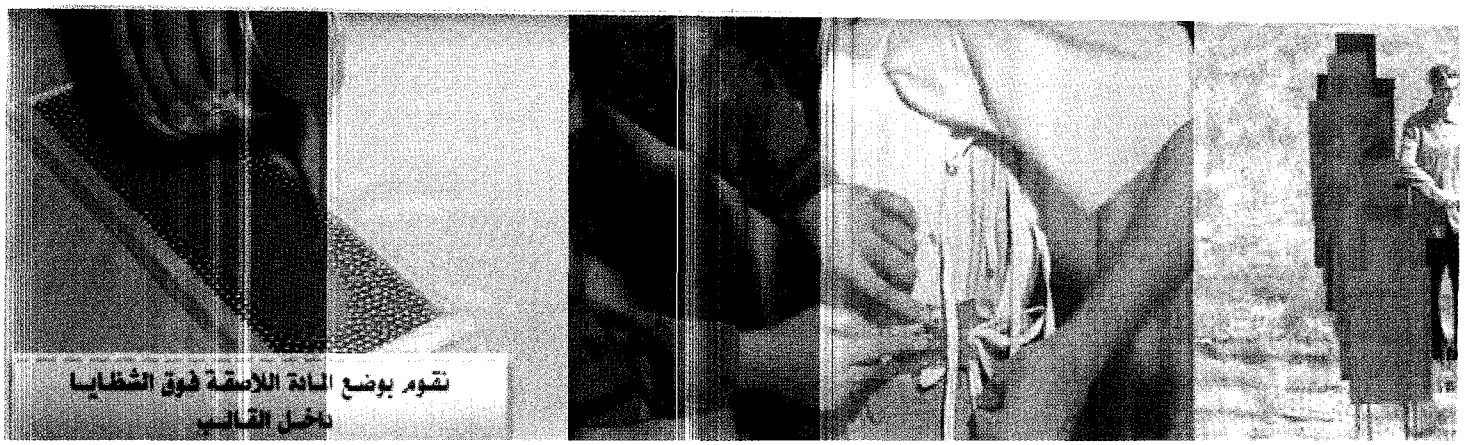


As a central figure in this new effort, Irhabi was becoming an asset to terrorists worldwide. One cyber-terrorism consultant, the Irhabi-tracker Evan Kohlmann, went so far as to call him "the AT&T of al-Qaeda."

As Irhabi worked to build himself up, Aaron Weisburd resolved to take him down. A computer programmer by training, with expertise in Web development, Weisburd began tracking online jihadists in 2002 from his home office in Carbondale, Illinois. When I visited him there this past year, two days before he celebrated Passover, he had hung a giant American flag from a window so that I couldn't miss the house. He lives with his wife, three well-fed cats, and two sick dogs.

Born in New York City in 1964, Weisburd declared his own private war against al-Qaeda because he was mad—mad that Yasir Arafat had rejected the peace plan at Camp David in 2000, mad that al-Qaeda had blown up the buildings in Manhattan he grew up around, and mad because he had read that Hamas was teaching Palestinian kindergartners to hate Israelis. So he set up Internet Haganah, a site designed to put jihadists like Irhabi on the law-enforcement radar screen (*haganah* is the Hebrew word for "defense," and a reference to the proto-Israeli army of the 1940s).

Weisburd is the only paid full-time member of Internet Haganah. He runs his operation from the second-floor office of his home. Surrounded by five computers, he trawls online in search of the press statements and videos that terrorists release to rally their supporters. He goes undercover, logging on to restricted forums (if he has been able to get a password) and visiting the many open sites advocating jihad. He doesn't speak Arabic but insists the limitation doesn't slow him down much. Though he relies on translation software at times, and on associates in Internet Haganah's network who speak Arabic, linguistic comprehension isn't his goal. "You're dealing with a group of people who are very demonstrative," he said. "They're working to make their text look like they feel." When he finds the terrorist press releases and videos, he works to figure out where they're coming from. Then he either shames service providers into shutting down the sites that host them or gathers what he terms "intel" for interested parties. On Internet Haganah he maintains a blog to rally his own side, providing an outlet for people eager to contribute their time and money to the fight against terrorism. The blog has an added benefit: because Weisburd closely monitors its traffic, he can watch the jihadists watching him.

About a dozen groups in the United States, many of them founded in the wake of 9/11, monitor jihadi chat rooms. They range from the well established (like the TRC and the Search for International Terrorist Entities Institute) to the slightly out there (like the Northeast Intelligence Network) to networks run by solo mavericks like Weisburd and Evan Kohlmann (who works out of his apartment in New York City). Most of the analysts offer consulting services to governments and private clients, and some accept donations. The bigger groups employ Arabic linguists, a scarce and vital resource that can help win lucrative contracts. In a competitive field, Weisburd stands out, not only for his technical expertise but also for his combative approach. Getting Web sites shut down, as Weisburd does, strikes some of his peers as counterproductive, because it complicates surveillance.

In 2004, Weisburd posted entries on Internet Haganah taunting Irhabi that succeeded in getting under the jihadist's skin. "That pig hacked into my machine and destroyed the site," Irhabi vented shortly after joining al-Ansar. A member of that site who sometimes worked in tandem with Irhabi posted Weisburd's home address, promising vengeance. "By the way, Aaron," Irhabi wrote a month later, "the new layout of your website looks ... how do i put it? ... SHITTY." Irhabi posted the street address again in June, along with a photo of Weisburd and a copy of a death threat sent to his house. "To the Jewish asshole Aaron Weisburd," it read. "This is our donation to you, either you close the website called Internet Haganah by next week or you will [be] beheaded." This was followed by an image of a laughing face and "p.s. ... I get to keep a finger or an ear .... [a] little souvenir. ahahahahha."

The threat convinced Weisburd that he was doing something right—as did a prior al-Qaeda "denial of service" attack against Internet Haganah, an illegal technique of sending so many requests to a Web site that it crashes. After that attack Weisburd quit his day job and decided to track his tormenters full-time. "The first threat I got was from a leader of al-Qaeda," he said. "Once you internalize a threat like that, it's downhill. A couple of years later, Hamas described me as a 'virus.' I was like: Nice of you to notice, guys."

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's skill at using the Internet to promote his efforts is unmatched by any of his fellow terrorists—including Osama bin Laden and other leaders of al-Qaeda. Al-Zarqawi pioneered using an online press secretary—someone who, until early this year, when


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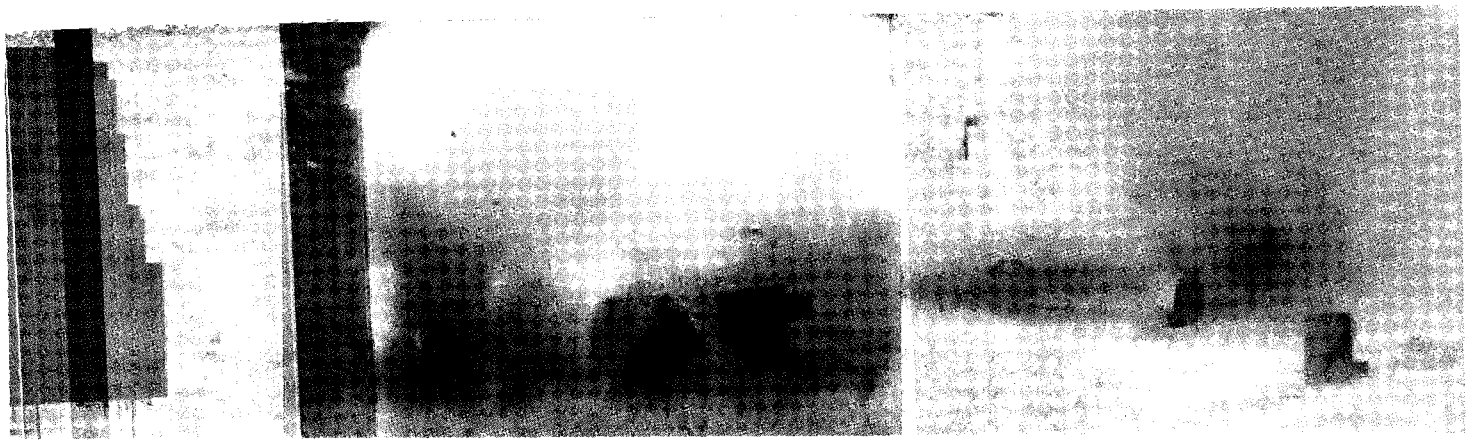

*Scenes from a suicide-bombing training video*

he seems to have faded away, went by the name of Abu Maysara al-Iraqi. Abu Maysara's posts were widely held to be authentic transmissions from al-Zarqawi himself. When Irhabi was first observed online, in 2003, he had no apparent connection to al-Zarqawi's network; he was just a self-starter who applied himself to solving problems. But when Abu Maysara posted links online, Irhabi would often set up mirror links immediately after.

One technique Irhabi used to create such sites was to find vulnerabilities in the File Transfer Protocol (FTP) servers that many organizations use to move cumbersome files around. Unbeknownst to the groups paying for those servers, Irhabi would dump his files there, thus saving the jihadists money and reducing risk. In July 2004, he showed off his prowess by uploading about sixty files, including videos of bin Laden and the 9/11 hijackers, onto an FTP server at the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department. Then, on al-Ansar, he posted links to the files. "Hurry to download," he warned, anticipating that the files wouldn't stay on the site long. He was right: Laura Mansfield, an analyst then working for the Northeast Intelligence Network, in Erie, Pennsylvania, soon spotted them and had them removed. Though pulled down in less than a day, the files lasted long enough for Irhabi to make a splash in *The Washington Post*. Days later, an al-Ansar member thanked him for all his hard work, referring to him as the "knight of jihadi media," to which Irhabi responded, "haha ... is this the new nickname? I am only the slave of God, the son of the slave of God." Soon, Irhabi's online groupies began tacking "007" onto their own screen names.

**Right from the start, Irhabi was determined to make himself useful. "I'm looking for soldier footages from within U.S. bases etc.," he wrote online in March 2004. "That's the fish I want to catch."**

In October, Irhabi's place in the jihadi firmament was confirmed when Abu Maysara posted a video of a suicide bombing in Iraq, and Irhabi posted mirrors six minutes later. "Long live the terrorist ... Irhabi 007," Abu Maysara exulted. "By God, your existence gladden[s] me, my beloved brother." Abu Maysara's direct endorsement was a rarity, Kohlmann says, and greatly increased Irhabi's visibility. "Irhabi got the attention of the important people," he adds.

The relationship between Irhabi and al-Zarqawi seems then to have deepened, and by the spring of 2005, Irhabi was playing a central role in al-Zarqawi's PR network. Irhabi started running a host site that Kohlmann believes contained material received directly from al-Zarqawi's people. If that's true—and it's hard to prove definitively, because copies can be made within seconds—there had to be coordination behind the scenes. Kohlmann discovered what may have been evidence of that coordination when he happened upon a Web site that Irhabi was in the process of building. Irhabi had left open a directory on his server, and Kohlmann found a file that was a draft of a Web site for al-Zarqawi's group, Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers. The site never went live. "We know there was communication," Kohlmann said. "We just don't know how much."

Finally, though, Irhabi got too smart for his own good.

In July 2005, using a credit card stolen from someone with a Paris address, Irhabi placed an order with a Web provider in Los Angeles for a domain that consisted of thirty-seven digits, all zeroes and ones. Gregor Loock, who ran the service, processed the $72.92 order and paid little attention, thinking, Maybe some geek wants a Web site in binary code. Two days later, however, Loock received a request for a domain name with a slightly different string of zeroes and ones—and this time the order was put through on a credit card in the name of a woman in Britain. Suspecting fraud, Loock rejected the order, shut down the earlier account, and started perusing the backup files he'd made of the first site.

Loock's suspicions deepened when he saw the names on some of the ZIP files: Fallujah, Samarra, and other cities he recognized from the news about Iraq. He couldn't read the documents, which were in Arabic, but he could watch the videos. At first they seemed like footage he'd seen on TV about the insurgency, showing American forces under enemy fire. But these videos were different. "One of these martyrs

COURTESY OF SITE INSTITUTE



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was going to someone in the middle of the night, taping a belt to himself," Loock said. "The man seemed to approach American soldiers, who opened fire, blowing him up." Then it dawned on Loock: these videos were from the attackers' point of view. He proceeded to do what is known as a "reverse DNS lookup," running a trace on the IP addresses that had been used to upload the files, which turned out to come from Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom.

Loock went to the FBI's Web site, which has a section for tips from the public, and filled out a form. No response. He called and spoke to an agent, who promised that another agent would be in touch. No response. He talked to his brother-in-law, who is in the Navy and forwarded the information to the CIA. No response. Eventually he contacted an agent at the Department of Homeland Security, and, as he put it, "things went pretty fast after that." The agent visited Loock's house with a computer specialist, and Loock handed over everything that he'd discovered: the credit-card numbers that he thought were stolen, the files, and his searches of the IP addresses.

Irhabi had slipped up the year before, too. In July 2004, in setting up a Web site to publish a threat against Italy, Irhabi had picked a service provider that added a time stamp, the identity of the registered user, and the user's IP address whenever files were uploaded. Irhabi wasn't using anonymizing software or a proxy server at the time, and he made the mistake of using the provider at least twice before he stopped. Meanwhile, cyber-jihadists and readers of Internet Haganah began reporting that Irhabi's site was infected with a virus—news that prompted Aaron Weisburd and his associates to look at the pages' source code, the programming language that tells a browser what to do. There they found two IP addresses.

Weisburd wrote a blog entry on Internet Haganah publicizing the concern, which exacerbated anxiety among the cyber-jihadists, who keep track of what analysts write about them. To prove that his computer was clean, Irhabi posted a screen shot of a virus-free run, with his IP address hastily blotted out each of the nearly two dozen times it was listed. One of Weisburd's associates stared at the screen shot, found he could make out a number here and there, and managed to piece together a third IP address. The three addresses Weisburd now had were all different, but each turned out to be only one hop from a router in a London neighborhood known as Ealing. "Frequently, IP addresses are assigned dynamically," Weisburd said, explaining the significance of this discovery. "If you're Irhabi, you disconnect from the router and reconnect, and it reroutes in a way that gives you a new IP address. Irhabi was moving around on this small section of the network." By July, the information had been sent to U.S. and British law enforcement, but to no apparent end. Eventually, in September 2005, Weisburd had had enough. "Irhabi 007 is in Ealing, England," he announced on Internet Haganah. "Or at least that's where the bastard was when we located him (a year and a half ago). Why nothing was done about him then—despite the fact that we had also acquired hundreds of pages from various Islamist forums where Irhabi 007 admitted to committing a broad range of computer crimes—this I cannot tell you." But something *was* being done.

A month after Weisburd's announcement, a young Swede born in Serbia-Montenegro was arrested in a Sarajevo apartment as he was preparing a suicide attack. The Bosnians called British authorities about the man and his co-conspirators, based on evidence seized during their arrest. Working off that tip, the British police converged on a basement apartment in a quiet, middle-class section of West London, just a few minutes' walk from the Shepherd's Bush tube stop on the Central Line—and only five stops away from Ealing. In the apartment, the police found and arrested Younis Tsouli, a twenty-two-year-old of Moroccan ancestry who lived there with his father.

Last November, New Scotland Yard announced eight charges against Tsouli based in part on what had been found on his computer: video slides about how to make a car bomb, and photos of Washington, D.C., that included an emergency van used to test chemical, radiological, biological, and nuclear material. That evidence, the indictment charged, along with more items discovered at the apartments of two other men (Waseem Mughal and Tariq al-Daour), gave rise to the "reasonable suspicion" that Tsouli was involved in "the commission, preparation or instigation of an act of terrorism"—a rocket bomb attack on an undisclosed location. Tsouli was also charged with conspiracies to commit murder, to cause an explosion, to raise money for terrorist purposes, and to obtain "property belonging to others" with stolen credit cards.

---

**ARABIC**

Each mark a motion caught in ink, a dancer's
Slow kick, a series of bowing waves, the path
Of spilt salt—sharp *J*s sloping up and *I*s
Like silhouettes of men or minarets
Seen miles ahead. Sometimes a number I
Could recognize: the year, a price for dates
Or Dexedrine; the street-side signs defiant
As captives; every book impenetrable.

Our hands did all the talking, gave commands
To cars in gestures: "Stop" (a palm outstretched),
And after, "Move along" (a rolling wave).
Thumbs up for soccer balls, down for Saddam.
In crowds I'd cross my arms and shake at all
The baffled curses hurled in my face like sand.

—ALEXANDER NEMSER

*Alexander Nemser is completing an undergraduate degree in literature at Yale. He won first prize in* The Atlantic's *2004 Student Writing Contest in poetry.*



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## NO WONDER PEOPLE THINK

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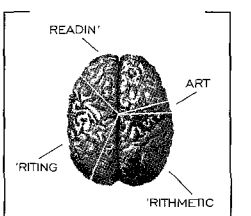


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DORIS DUKE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

AMERICANS for the ARTS

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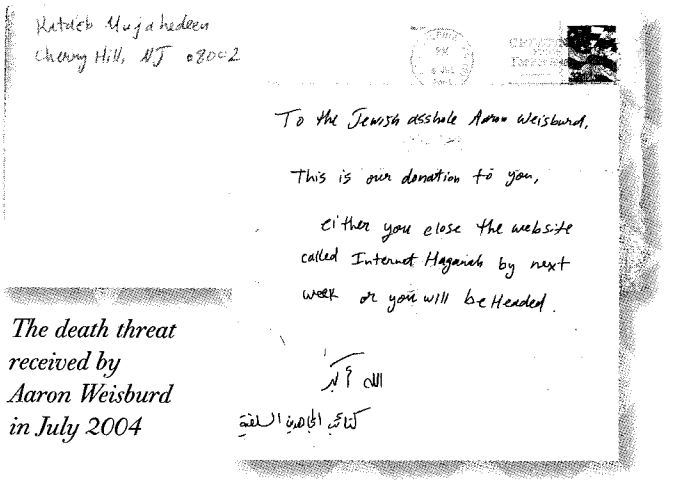
A few months earlier, New Scotland Yard had learned from the Department of Homeland Security about the two stolen credit-card numbers that had been given to Loock to set up the strange sites with names in zeroes and ones. When investigators later entered the credit-card numbers found during their West London raid into their database, the Loock numbers popped up as matches. Tsouli, they realized with excitement, might well be Irhabi 007.

In February one of the terrorist-monitoring groups, the Search for International Terrorist Entities Institute, went public with the claim that Tsouli had been "recently revealed to be the infamous 'Irhabi 007' himself"—a hacker whose "teachings and contributions to the jihadi Internet community reigned unparalleled until the summer of 2005." A source close to the case has since discovered that Tsouli, who doesn't speak Arabic fluently, was working in tandem with his alleged co-conspirators, Mughal and al-Daour, and perhaps others. The director and co-founder of SITE, Rita Katz, noted the volume of Irhabi's posts, many of them "very time-consuming uploads," and the numerous requests he fielded from the al-Ansar community as evidence that "he could not have been a one-man operation."


Rateb Mujahedeen
Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

To the Jewish asshole Aaron Weisburd,

This is our donation to you,

either you close the website called Internet Haganah by next week or you will be Headed.



*The death threat received by Aaron Weisburd in July 2004*

and zionists' Web sites, drafted by Irhabi 007," it includes file-transfer programs and the infamous password cracker "John the Ripper," along with its own hit list.

Online jihadists can now do serious damage—and they're learning to stay under the radar. In the early days, before the Iraq War, the "online global jihad" amounted to a collection of chat rooms where angry members could let off steam and

**Irhabi's place in the jihadi firmament was confirmed when al-Zarqawi's press secretary posted a video of a bombing in Iraq. Six minutes later, Irhabi posted mirrors. "By God, your existence gladden[s] me, my beloved brother," the press secretary exulted.**

At a preliminary hearing in May, Tsouli and his fellow suspects appeared by video link from the top-security prison in southeast London where they're being held. Wearing a white T-shirt and jogging pants, Tsouli sat between Mughal and al-Daour, folding his arms over his chest and slouching in his chair. He showed little reaction to the procedural matters being discussed, uncrossing his arms only to muffle his laughter with his hand at something one of his companions said.

For some time yet, Tsouli will remain a distant figure, understood only dimly through the online identity he may have created. His trial has not begun, and British law strictly limits disclosures about ongoing cases. Still, whether Irhabi turns out to have been an individual—Tsouli—or a composite is less important than the legacy he has left behind.

Months after Tsouli's arrest, a member of an English-language jihadi chat room wrote, "I was wondering if anyone knows how to find vulnerabilities on servers or hacking in general (*erhabis* hacking tips), can they please post in here." He was directed to muslimhackers.com and told to send a private e-mail to the administrator for a password. Muslimhackers offers tips on how to target members of its hit list, which includes Internet Haganah and a number of sites run by Shiites. Since that time, Irhabi's guide to the Internet has also been making the rounds in a number of popular forums; titled "The encyclopedia on hacking the crusaders' experiment with threatening graphics. The sites welcomed visitors, offering a painless process of registration; today they present tougher barriers to entry and place a greater emphasis on remaining anonymous and secure. There are now scores of sites, and the competition among them to become the one to watch is fierce. These sites constitute a sophisticated media machine with which terrorists like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi can shape their image, test their message, and broadcast their news swiftly and securely, often in the form of slick videos. Forum members thrive on the brutal rhetoric and are encouraged to participate in a way that enhances their sense of belonging and importance. That participation poses a threat deeper than propaganda, because it helps terrorists find and train recruits willing to strap themselves into suicide vests and blow themselves up.

The arrest of Younis Tsouli, unfortunately, represents not the end of the story but only its beginning. "Irhabi was the right man at the right time when the terrorists were in need of a robust online network," Katz said. "Today, that network is established. What Irhabi taught the jihadi community is out there." What Irhabi helped create—a template for his own replication online—has opened a door to a struggle that is likely to be with us for a long time. Commenting recently on that struggle, a member of a jihadi forum that Irhabi had frequented captured an essential, if figurative, truth. "By the way brothers," he announced, "Irhabi 007 is free."

COURTESY OF A. AARON WEISBURD



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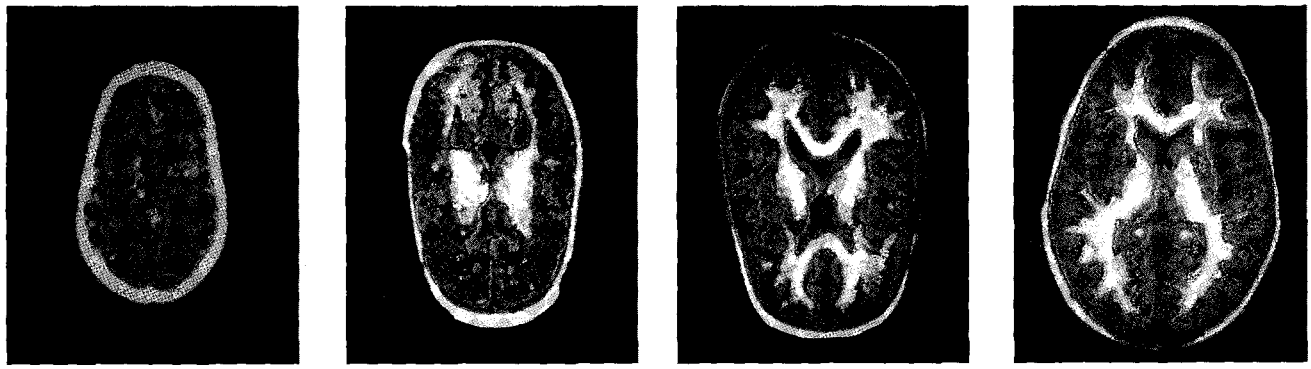

*Magnetic resonance scans, showing infant brain development*

# EXTREME PARENTING

*Does the Baby Genius Edutainment Complex enrich your child's mind—or stifle it?*

BY ALISSA QUART

Common wisdom holds that it is wholesome and American to give children the best chance for success: to fill their rooms with lush playthings, to adorn their walls with bright alphabet letters and their plates with mercury-free salmon. Lately, however, the pursuit of advantage has taken an extreme turn. Not long ago, words like *gifted* and *precocious* were applied mainly to older kids who read a lot, calculated in their heads, or took more than the average number of after-school classes. (I was one of them.) But in recent years, as a new child-enrichment business has marched into babyhood, right through infancy, and even into the womb, it sometimes seems as though any parent who doesn't aspire to have his or her child show early evidence of "talent" is somehow being less than fully American.

The vast giftedness industry has expanded to include such disparate phenomena as the teaching of baby sign language, the IQ testing of toddlers, and the proliferation of video programs like the Baby Einstein series. (Never mind that Einstein himself was a late bloomer; he didn't speak until he was three, and no one thought him "gifted.") Specialized camps and competitions are now enrolling the youngest of children; classes include soccer for three-year-olds and Broadway Babies for starlets of only six months.

I call it the Baby Genius Edutainment Complex, the first stage of the American passion for making gifted children. It reflects a faith that if babies are exposed to enough stimulating multimedia content, typically in tandem with equally stirring classes, bright children can be invented.

Parents who press their children to succeed do so in hopes of preparing them for an adulthood of high achievement. Economically anxious, many parents see their children's accomplishments as a sort of insurance against the financial challenges of old age; high-achieving kids, this logic goes, will become high-earning adults, and therefore be better able to help Mom and Dad pay for the assisted-living facility in a few decades. And, of course, kids can be a handy vehicle for combating status anxiety: even if your net worth is failing to keep up with the Einsteins' next door, you can still take solace in the fact that while the Einsteins' son is barely speaking in complete sentences, your son is already reading Heidegger.

But with so much competition for everything from preschool to summer camp to college, children must work harder and train more extensively than ever to out-achieve their equally avid young rivals. It's into this nexus of anxiety and aspiration that these new brainy-baby products have flooded, promising scientifically demonstrated mind enrichment for your children. But the line between activities that nurture and those that merely waste time (and money) is not always so clear. Which raises the question: Whose purpose does all of this aggressive early learning serve?

Until 1997, there was no such thing as Baby Einstein. Six years later, one American child in three had watched a Baby Einstein video, seeing such ostensibly mind-developing scenes as the one, in *Baby Van Gogh*, where a puppet called Vincent van Goat trots through the six primary colors as they appear in van Gogh's *Starry Night* and *Wheat Fields With Reaper at Sunrise*. Some parents may have also exposed their children to competing products:

SCIENCE SOURCE/PHOTO RESEARCHERS, INC.

*Alissa Quart is the author of the forthcoming* Hothouse Kids: The Dilemma of the Gifted Child *(Penguin Press), from which this article is drawn.*



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WHAT LEADS AN EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD IN A NEW JERSEY TOWN TO BECOME A

# TERRORIST

Martha Updike

THE EXTRAORDINARY NEW NOVEL BY

# JOHN UPDIKE

THE FIRST ADVANCE REVIEWS

"Timely and topical, poised and passionate, it is a high mark in Updike's career...A masterpiece"
—BOOKLIST

"Updike continues to entice, provoke, and astonish. Who knows where he'll take us next?"
—KIRKUS REVIEWS (starred)

"Packs a gut punch...Mullahs, botched CIA gambits, race and class shame [are] all here, and dispatched with an elegance that highlights their banality and how very real they may be."
—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (starred)

Photo © Carl Wyn Williams

Eighteen-year-old Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy is devoted to Allah and the words of the Holy Qur'an, as expounded to him by a local mosque's imam.

His mother is Irish-American; his Egyptian father disappeared when he was three. He feels his faith is threatened by the materialistic, hedonistic society he sees around him.

Nothing, nobody seems able to divert Ahmad from what his religion calls the Straight Path.

Gradually the threads of a plot gather around him....

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the So Smart! two-disk set, suggested for infants of nine months and up, features interactive alphabet games an infant can play on the TV screen, using the remote control, while the V.Smile video game system promotes itself for toddlers with the slogan "Turn game time into brain time."

DVDs with characters like Vincent van Goat may be cute, but their selling point is that they offer their young viewers a great deal more than entertainment. The *Baby Prodigy* DVD claims to give your child "A Head Start in Life!" The disc's back copy reads: "Did you know that you can actually help to enhance the development of your baby's brain? The first 30 months of life is the period when a child's brain undergoes its most critical stages of evolution ... Together we can help to make your child the next Baby Prodigy!"

Walt Disney, Warner Brothers, and other studios have spent the last decade developing children's programming with an educational component (Disney owns Baby Einstein). Toy companies have also entered the fray: Fisher-Price, for example, a major DVD producer, is a subsidiary of Mattel. Videos and DVDs for preschool-age children earned $500 million in 2004—and overall sales of educational toys increased by 19 percent. As Dennis Fedoruk, president of Brainy Baby, says, "There's a bumper crop of new kids each month, after all."

The Baby Genius Edutainment Complex owes its explosive growth to more than just savvy marketing; it also has roots in actual scientific research. The popularity of DVDs with classical music, pinwheels, and colorful imagery was incited by infant-development theories that became fashionable in the early 1990s. As Liz Iftikhar, founder and president of Baby BumbleBee, puts it, the kid-vid biz emerged on the back of the "Mozart Effect."

In 1993, Gordon Shaw and Frances Rauscher—researchers at the University of California at Irvine—conducted a study in which a group of college students listened to ten minutes of a Mozart sonata, a relaxation tape, or silence. Then the groups took a paper-folding-and-cutting test. Those who had listened to Mozart reportedly performed better than those who had not. Shaw and Rauscher concluded that listening to Mozart improved the students' short-term spatial thinking. In 1995, a slightly different study by the same researchers yielded similar findings.

It wasn't long before someone proposed that the results could apply to infants. (Zell Miller, then governor of Georgia, pushed his state to send a classical-music cassette or CD to every newborn.) Video companies seized on the idea that classical music played to infants, or even to fetuses, would improve their ability to reason. In 1995, they started to make videos for babies, usually with a classical-music component, and touted them as beneficially stimulating. One music impresario, Don Campbell, trademarked the term *Mozart Effect* and used it to sell what he called "educational" CDs for infants and books.

But here's the catch: according to the effect's doubters, no psychologist or musicologist has been able to persuasively duplicate the result that Shaw and Rauscher described. Kenneth Steele, a professor of psychology at Appalachian State University, was one of the scholars who tried several times and failed. He eventually became the notion's greatest critic, publishing half a dozen papers debunking it, chief among them "Prelude or Requiem for the 'Mozart Effect'?" in *Nature* magazine in 1999. To date, the Mozart Effect has failed to be replicated in scientific settings on at least a few dozen occasions. Even Rauscher, although she stands by her findings, has been amazed by the appropriation of her work for corporate ends. In a 1999 television debate, Rauscher agreed with Steele, saying, "There's no scientific data suggesting that playing Mozart to babies is going to make them 'smarter.'"

None of this, however, has stemmed the spread of the Baby Genius Edutainment Complex—far from it. The complex has only expanded since the mid-1990s, building on the claim that the creation of infant prodigies can now begin in the womb. Brent Logan, the president of BabyPlus and author of *Learning Before Birth: Every Child Deserves Giftedness*, promises that his prenatal sound-delivery system, a speaker unit that a pregnant woman wears in a fabric pouch strapped to her abdomen, will produce a higher-than-average IQ. The key to his pitch appears to follow the logic of inversion: infants in Romania who are deprived of stimuli suffer as adults, he notes, and thus infants in America who are stimulated by a product like his will blossom. "Babies and children enriched with BabyPlus," his company's ads claim, "are more relaxed at birth, with eyes and hands open, crying little"; they "reach their milestones earlier" and "have longer attention spans." The pitch preys on parents' fears that their children might not hit milestones early, or even at the "normal" time.

The claims made by the producers of these DVDs and similar products may seem absurd, but the impulses that drive parents to purchase them are understandable. The wish to raise flourishing children is as old as humankind. Today's Baby Genius Edutainment Complex yokes together two concepts of infant betterment: first, that parents can help a child develop many skills and aptitudes that are not inborn; and second, that if the child isn't launched on the route to super-achievement in the first years of life, he or she will be doomed forever to mediocrity or worse. As this notion of a compressed time frame for baby-genius cultivation has become more widespread over the last ten years, parents have become much more susceptible to sales pitches for flash cards, DVDs, toys, and games that promise to provide "just the right level" of stimulation.

Educational stimulation has not always been the primary aim of children's playthings. Until the twilight of the nineteenth century, what few toys children had were made at home, usually by hand. Diminutive replicas of babies, women, and furniture enabled children to engage the larger world at their level, that of small bit players. Such toys were meant to help pass the time, not to create genius.

The turn of the last century saw a rise of mass-produced toys designed for solitary play. Milton Bradley (founded in 1864), Parker Brothers (1888), and Playskool (1928) were the first three toy companies to specialize in "education games." The teddy bear emerged in Brooklyn in 1902 and soon became faddish; it was thought to spur children's emotional



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growth. Lincoln Logs (invented in 1917 by John Lloyd Wright, son of the architect Frank), Crayola crayons (first produced in 1903), and Erector sets (introduced in 1913) all signaled an increase in time spent indoors by the children of newly prosperous families. A notion of playthings that helped children grow up was on the rise, but these toys did not claim to promote a child's acuity. (In an article in a toy trade magazine in 1927, dolls were termed an "Antidote for Race Suicide," in that they would encourage white girls to reproduce.)

Around this same time, the educator Maria Montessori designed toys to teach math concepts and declared that pupils would learn willingly if their schoolwork were more like play. Montessori's ideas caught on among some educators, but also sparked much debate about the nature of toys. Academics championed free play and urged industry executives to make better-quality toys that appealed to the imagination.

But many toys still left little for young minds to conjure with. By 1957, the cultural critic Roland Barthes was decrying his era's playthings as products of "chemistry not nature." He was horrified that there were "dolls which urinate" and other toys "meant to prepare the little girl for the causality of housekeeping, to 'condition' her to her future role as mother." These toys, Barthes wrote, "are meant to produce children who are users, not creators." He was enunciating what was to become a central tenet of scholars of play: self-directed play is superior, and toys that invite children to improvise and imagine are better than those that are passive and preprogrammed.

The study of toys reached a high point during the seventies with Erik Erikson's books *Childhood and Society* and *Toys and Reason*. Erikson created a developmental timeline, starting with "autocosmic play," in which infants play with their own bodies, and going on to a toy "microsphere," followed by the "macrosphere" of play with other children. Erikson underlined that playing with toys is a part of identity formation, and insisted that a child's world of manageable toys should be interfered with as little as possible.

By the 1950s, toys had become short-term and expendable: Davy Crockett hats and the like—spin-off gear from television shows or children's movies. This isn't to say that the "maturational" function of toys vanished. Lego won a large following as an "instructive game" in the late fifties and early sixties, and when the ultimate maturational television program, *Sesame Street*, debuted in 1969, a line of educational toys followed in its wake. The lessons of *Sesame Street* were strongly influenced by Maria Montessori's educational philosophy, and from the beginning the show's producers, the Children's Television Workshop, worked hard to connect with young children and their families in low-income areas. In fact the show was viewed as an extension of the 1960s War on Poverty, and was funded in part by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Some of the early debates that swirled around *Sesame Street* are echoed today in the debates over the Baby Genius Edutainment Complex. The program's critics argued that young children benefit from playing inventively on their own, rather than watching television. But there is a crucial difference between edutainment DVDs and *Sesame Street*: the TV show was not intended for babies, while today's DVDs are made explicitly for children two and under. And now even *Sesame Street* has an infant DVD line.

Many infant DVDs are hawked with dubious information about time-limited opportunities for learning. Some products prey on parental fears, invoking the specter of infant brain-cell death. Charles Zorn, a neuropsychological education specialist, told me that he often has to reassure parents that brain-cell counts are not a measure of a child's intelligence, knowledge, or ability to learn. The brain deliberately makes too many, then lets a bunch wither; which ones wither depends on the environment the newborn encounters. Cell death is actually part of the development process. "When you learn to read, you are killing cells to create a pathway," Zorn says. Indeed, reducing infant brain-cell death is counterproductive; cell death is a way the nervous system refines its circuits.

But nervous parents are not inclined to make such fine distinctions. And the industry does its best to blur these distinctions anyway. "Parents know about that preschool window of opportunity—it's very narrow," says Dennis Fedoruk of Brainy Baby. "Parents want to maximize results in their children without causing their children trouble. Listen, you can't turn back the hands of time. Once they enter kindergarten, they can't have the window of opportunity any longer. It's too late."

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Karen Foster, CEO and founder of Athletic Baby, points to Tiger Woods as she tells me that her *Athletic Baby Golf* and *Athletic Baby All-Star* DVDs help parents give their kids a head start. "Everyone has heard about Tiger's imprinting from an early age by his father," she says. "The earlier the age, the more successful they will be." Foster gives the standard edutainment-complex line: if infant deprivation yields negative effects, these "enriching" products must inversely produce a positive effect.

"BabyPlus helps with imprinting," claims Brent Logan, CEO of BabyPlus. "And soon, the imprinting window shuts off for the pre-infants." These pitches could make most any parent nervous. ("I do believe that the brain has a certain clump of neurons firing, and that by the time [my baby] is five, it will be too late," one woman, an educated professional who consumes these products avidly, told me. "It sounds panicky, I know, but if those neurons are dying off ... You have to get in there during the first three years. If my baby doesn't use it, with a stimulating game or class, he is going to lose it.") But are these pitches accurate? To start answering this question, one needs to separate the popular ideas of "crucial stages" and "imprinting" and "brain plasticity"—which is today's scientized buzzword for "ability to learn"—from the science and cultural history underlying them.

Americans have long sought to control natural processes, demonstrating both our faith in the human ability to harness nature and our obsession with using time shrewdly. When the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget toured American universities in the 1950s, describing the cognitive stages children pass through as they mature, audience members wanted to know how they could make their children go through those stages faster. (Piaget was not pleased.) In the last decade or so, this emphasis on early development has been touted by celebrity foundations like Rob Reiner's Parents' Action for Children, whose slogan is "The first years last forever." This, coupled with the findings of several studies and an aggressive federal information campaign, has generated rising awareness of the crucial zero-to-three period.

But recently scholars have cast doubt on this time frame as an absolute. William Greenough, whose much-publicized studies of brain development in rats in the eighties helped pave the way for the current obsessions with sensory stimulus in infants, is a vehement critic of the new overemphasis on early learning. His research supports the idea that the brain continues to be plastic—still developing—after infancy. Indeed, many neuroscientists now deny that even adult brains lose plasticity.

"It's important to point out that windows of development do not slam shut, as the earliest versions of [Parents' Action for Children] and the Birth to Three movement suggested," says Bradley Schlaggar, a pediatric neurologist at Washington University in St. Louis. One implication of that claim, he says, is that "when the development windows are thought to slam shut, parents may feel that the case is closed, and must try again with the next child."

Schlaggar and many of the other neurologists, cognitive scientists, psychologists, and child-development specialists I spoke with questioned the idea that educational toys or DVDs accomplish what their makers claim. In a study by a University of Massachusetts researcher, a sample group of infants learned to use a puppet from a live teacher, while another group studied a video. The tots who had a teacher learned to use the puppet immediately, but the infant video-watchers had to view the instruction six times before they learned the same skill. As Charles Nelson, a professor at Harvard Medical School and a preeminent scholar of the infant brain, puts it, "There is no proof of the value of the early-enrichment toys and videos in terms of brain science."

A number of scholars also argue that the idea of hard-and-fast "critical periods" is overplayed. For one thing, there is a difference between brain functions that are "experience-expectant" (which are bound by critical periods), and those that are "experience-dependent" (which are not). For instance, the brain requires that the eyes be exposed to light so that vision can develop properly. This must take place at a particular point in the development of all infants—it is experience-expectant. Experience-dependent learning, by contrast, is environmentally conditioned—learning a language or an instrument, or making a dumpling. This sort of learning is less governed by time. As John Bruer, an education consultant and the author of *The Myth of the First Three Years*, puts it, "critical periods are less likely for traits and behaviors ... that are unique to the experiences of individuals, social groups, or cultures."

According to Fred Dick, a developmental cognitive neuroscientist and a lecturer in psychology at the University of London, starting early to learn a second or even third language can be a good thing. But "early" doesn't mean in infancy. Furthermore, language-study DVDs tend to offer only disconnected words, and typically a child must be exposed to a language continuously to acquire it. Teaching a language to two or more children in person, at any age, may well be preferable to using videos, because a normal environment with another child "holds more information than any multimedia film," Dick says. Studies have shown that the ability to learn the grammar of a second language doesn't begin to decline until puberty—quite a while after the age of three.

Academics who study cognition also question the value of prenatal enrichment products. Gary Marcus, a professor of psychology at New York University and the author of *The Birth of the Mind*, says that while it is possible to learn something in the womb, it isn't good to give a fetus too much stimulation. And given the paucity of long-term research on the subject, it's hard to gauge what would be overstimulating: "We don't know enough about early brain development to say."

It's one thing if these products are ineffective. But what if they're actually damaging? A number of scholars have started to investigate whether children who have grown up watching educational videos have actually been hurt by their intense orientation to television. (In May, a child advocacy group filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, arguing that Brainy Baby and Baby Einstein product labeling



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should include the American Academy of Pediatrics' warning that children under two shouldn't watch any TV.) One study found that today's high level of indoor activity and play—even if it involved "learning"—harmed children's young bodies and minds. (The study was financed by Wisk Laundry Detergent—perhaps in an effort to promote grass stains.)

Despite these negative findings, and for all the fuzziness of the product-makers' claims, even the most sophisticated parents can be drawn to edutainment for babies.

"There are some guarantees with these products," says Lynne Varner, a forty-two-year-old newspaper columnist who lives in Seattle. "My son may not see all the colors in the prism every day. He may go outside and see a green tree one day and a roaring bus the next day, but I have to hope that nature and life offer everything to him. I want our child to always be doing something that stimulates him. And so does everyone I know."

Varner's accumulation of educational toys started with Baby Einstein and grew to include Baby BumbleBee toys purchased at the Imaginarium and the now-defunct Zany Brainy. The stores and products made reassuring promises that her kid was going to be smart, she says: Baby Einstein markets itself this way to the "über-parents" she knows.

On Amazon.com, parent reviewers likewise emphasize that displaying these videos is part of their responsibility to adequately stimulate their children. "My 1-year-old is growing into a Brainy Baby," writes one. "How many [babies] can tell you what an orangutan is, or the difference between a circle and an oval, or that the color of our van is 'silver'? My son could—from watching these videos!"

Of course, many parents don't entirely trust the pitches from the companies. Lynne Varner recognizes that they aim to capitalize on her worst fear: that her child will fall behind. But she still buys the products. Many parents, like Varner, buy them even as they remain skeptical about their claims. They don't want to fail to do the right thing for their kids. They want them to have every edge.

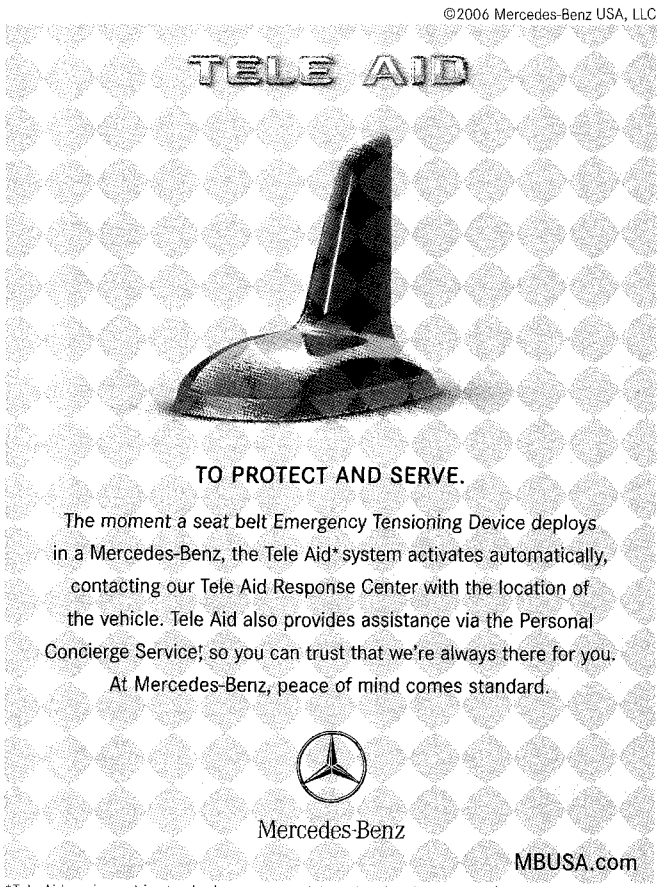
It seems to me that the Baby Genius Edutainment Complex also arises from a simpler fear than those about lost brain cells and missed opportunities. The edutainment products are, at bottom, meant to reduce unproductive time—to prevent idleness and stave off boredom. But what exactly is boredom for a child? "One of the most oppressive demands of adults [is] that the child should be interested," writes Adam Phillips in *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored*, "rather than take time to find what interests him. Boredom is integral to the process of taking one's time."

Some experts even argue that a certain amount of boredom is important for children's development. Fred Dick, the developmental cognitive neuroscientist, says an infant's caregivers should obviously attend to a child but not feel obliged to provide *constant* stimulation. But in the new, improved infancy, taking one's time—waiting for desire to awaken—goes against the grain.

One specialist in educating gifted children suggests that for an infant, watching a waving adult finger or playing with a set of keys can be just as stimulating as the whirling dervish of rainbows on a Baby Einstein DVD. Such simple pleasures, which adults find boring—and this is part of it: we can't remember how easily we were once entertained—are often just what infants need.

In the Baby Genius Edutainment Complex, the palliative for child boredom is always a new product, and it can seem that price is no object. In effect, these products are mostly intended for the reasonably well-off. The Leapster Multimedia Learning System is $70. BabyPlus runs to $150. The by-now-classic Baby Einstein videos—*Baby Mozart, Baby Bach, Baby Beethoven, Baby Einstein Language Nursery*, and *Baby Einstein Language Discovery Cards*—come as a special boxed set at $69.99.

Like other elements of childhood for the precociously gifted—private or home schooling, overstructured activity, and proto-professional training—edutainment products are part of a system that divides children into haves and have-lesses. The infants inculcated with the early-reading DVDs and flash cards are supposed to deploy their early advantage to get ahead of other reasonably affluent children. For those who can afford them, the DVDs and toys are just the beginning. After all, the educational-toy-and-video industry is a gateway into the larger giftedness culture; it's the start of the voyage on which America shapes its children into champions.





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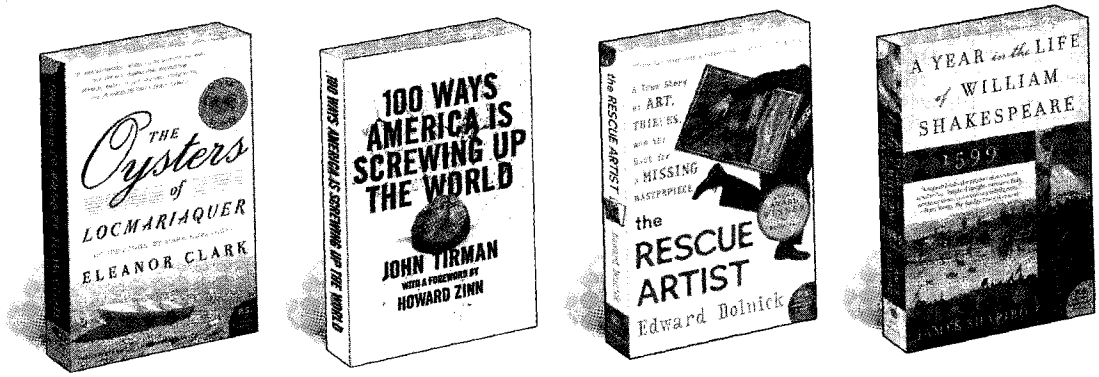


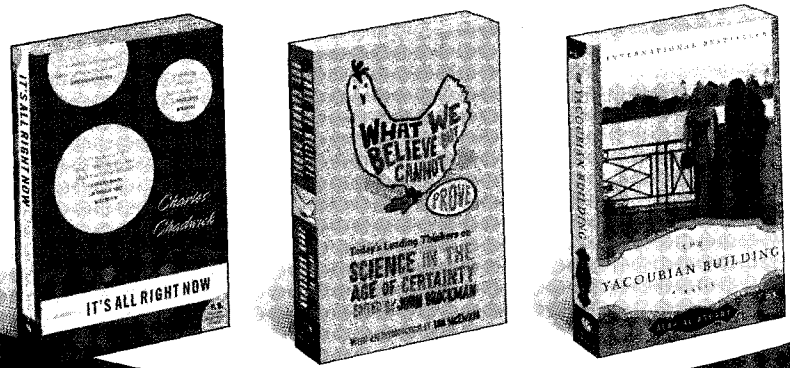


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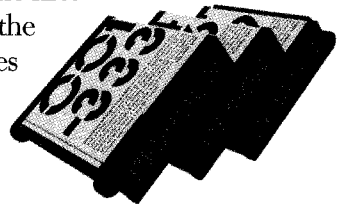
EDITOR'S CHOICE

# Chairs, Rag Mags, Indian Wars

*What to read this month*

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

Not since the early 1960s—when a Noguchi Akari lamp, a George Nelson platform bench, and a wooden Danish Modern salad bowl were emblems of the Tasteful and Sophisticated—has good design been so much the thing as it is in our age of *Dwell* magazine and that soon-to-be-ubiquitous chain boutique Design Within Reach. So this publishing feat and masterpiece of the bookmaker's art—a gorgeous three-volume, 3,000-plus-page, eighteen-pound (!) work that catalogs and elucidates 999 industrially made objects of classic design—taps into the zeitgeist, even if its spring publication date means it may sadly fail to tap into the holiday gift market (though at $175, it's a present only for someone you really, really like). Arranged chronologically (the first entry is a pair of Chinese scissors designed in the 1600s and still manufactured today), it embraces all manner of products, from the Spitfire fighter and the Brompton folding bicycle to computers, egg cups, and door handles (no fewer than six, including one that Wittgenstein designed). It also marries consistently zippy, exceptionally precise, artfully compressed text—which explicates each object's historical context and aesthetic and functional significance, and often the materials and processes of its manufacture—with imaginatively selected images (about 4,000 in all), including plans, old advertisements, and vivid photographs.



PHAIDON DESIGN CLASSICS
Phaidon

Those familiar with the history of design will find the obvious, iconic stuff—Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Hill House Ladder Back, Marcel Breuer's Wassily, Mies's Barcelona, Richard Neutra's Boomerang, Harry Bertoia's Diamond, Charles and Ray Eames's DAR, and Hans Wegner's "PP501" and "Y" (I'm talking chairs, which have more entries than any other product). But the anthology is at its most charming when it is at its most quirky. Its expositions on, say, packages (the Heinz ketchup bottle, the Marmite jar, the Toblerone box, the Kikkoman soy-sauce table bottle, the Kiwi shoe-polish tin) and quotidian objects (the clothes peg, the sugar dispenser, the paper clip, the toast rack, the Dixie cup, the measuring tape, the egg carton) reveal the evolution of industrial production and consumption and amount to a primer on what makes great design. Inevitably with this sort of



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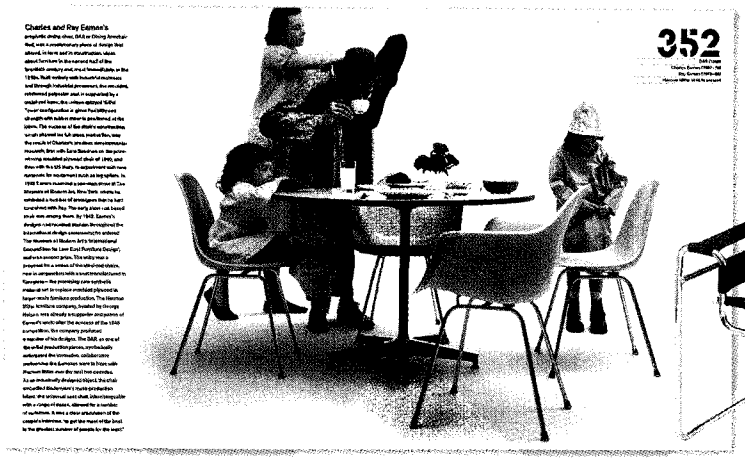


project, one quibbles. Why, for instance, include that epitome of late-hippie clunky, Frank Gehry's hideous Wiggle Chair, but not Heywood-Wakefield's comfortable, affordable, and supremely stylish Dog Biscuit Chair? (The Poulsen pendant lamp they laud may be beloved by architects and designers, but, as I know from bitter experience, changing its lightbulb is an exercise of military complexity.)

The collection's somewhat fuzzy selection criteria (the decision, for instance, to exclude garments and fashion accessories is at once understandable and inconsistent with its definition of a "design classic"), the contradictory emphasis on both the "timeless" and the "innovative," and the mystery surrounding how, exactly, the anointed objects were chosen and who did the choosing ("a wide range of international design-world insiders" were consulted, but who were the gatekeepers?) exacerbates the carping. A worse decision, though, is the choice to devote the final volume—one-third of the anthology—to products designed since 1966, and fully half of that book to objects designed since 1982. Many of these may indeed prove enduring, but really, it's far too soon to tell.

It's a shame the books can't be bought individually; I'd get the first two, which are a brilliantly curated collection of true design classics, and forget the third, which is essentially devoted either to objects from the 1970s (aesthetically, probably the ugliest era in human history) or to fads—some great, some not. Alas, the volumes are sold only in a set, with a snazzy carrying case—which I had to break to get the books out. Perhaps not design at its best. Still, great design ennobles daily life, and reading these handsome, well-made books, which illuminate hundreds of exquisitely functioning, beautiful products, is also an elevating experience.

**A Dash of Daring**, by Penelope Rowlands (Atria). On a bleak October day in 1933, Martin Munkacsi, a prestigious Hungarian photojournalist who'd never before taken a fashion picture, was on Long Island's Piping Rock Beach with a socialite model and Carmel Snow, the new fashion editrix of *Harper's Bazaar*, who had hired him to shoot a feature for the magazine's "Palm Beach" issue. Munkacsi, who would become one of the most successful photographers of his generation, ordered the shivering model in bathing suit and cloak to run toward the camera. The resulting snap revolutionized fashion photography. Until then, models were all but mannequins, elaborately and statically posed in the studios; from the Palm Beach issue forward, *Bazaar* had them diving, scaling sand dunes, jumping over puddles, scampering (naked) around swimming pools, and perched on camels. This was a new approach to fashion (one saw the clothes in action, as much as the models), and, in its effervescence and emphasis on physicality, it was a new approach to femininity.

Snow—warm but steely, blue-rinsed, with a weakness for martinis (a weakness that in the end proved tragic)—orchestrated this and the other transformations that made "the *Bazaar*" (as she called it) under her tenure, from 1933 through 1957, into what is widely considered the finest and most innovative fashion magazine in history. Snow had a genius for spotting genius. She famously proclaimed Christian Dior's spring 1947 collection the "New Look"; with her photographic eye for the details of tailoring, she recognized and tirelessly endorsed the austere, precisely cut creations of the retiring Cristóbal Balenciaga ("He knows a woman's body better than any living dressmaker," she declared). Above all, she applied that talent-spotting genius to remaking her magazine—and, in the process, fashion journalism. She brought on and served as mentor to Diana Vreeland, the future editor of *Vogue* and the prototypical flamboyant, dictatorial fashion diva, whose loopy *Bazaar* column in the 1930s, "Why Don't You?" ("Why don't you rinse your blond child's hair in Champagne, as the French do?"; "Why don't you wear bare knees and long white knitted socks, as Unity Mitford does when she takes tea with Hitler at the Carlton in Munich?"), was, owing to its apparent lack of irony, either charming or distasteful, depending on one's point of view. She signed up and enjoyed an intense, lasting collaboration with the now legendary art director Alexey Brodovitch, who, in turn, brought Man Ray on as an exclusive photographer for the magazine and who, in constructivist-inspired layouts, wrenched the photos out of their neat boxes and splayed them across the pages, thus bringing to *Bazaar* a stylized visual dynamism hitherto foreign to mass-circulation magazines. The Snow-Vreeland-Brodovitch editorial triumvirate was one of the most harmonious and fruitful partnerships in magazine history.

A periodical of extraordinary visual and graphic variety and distinction, Snow's *Bazaar* discovered and nurtured not only Munkacsi but also Richard Avedon (who pronounced Snow "the *only* editor whose judgment I could ever rely on"), Andy Warhol, and the pioneering color photographer Louise Dahl-Wolfe. (The photographs of Cecil Beaton and Henri Cartier-Bresson and the drawings of Jean Cocteau regularly enlivened the magazine as well.) Yet Snow also created a magazine for

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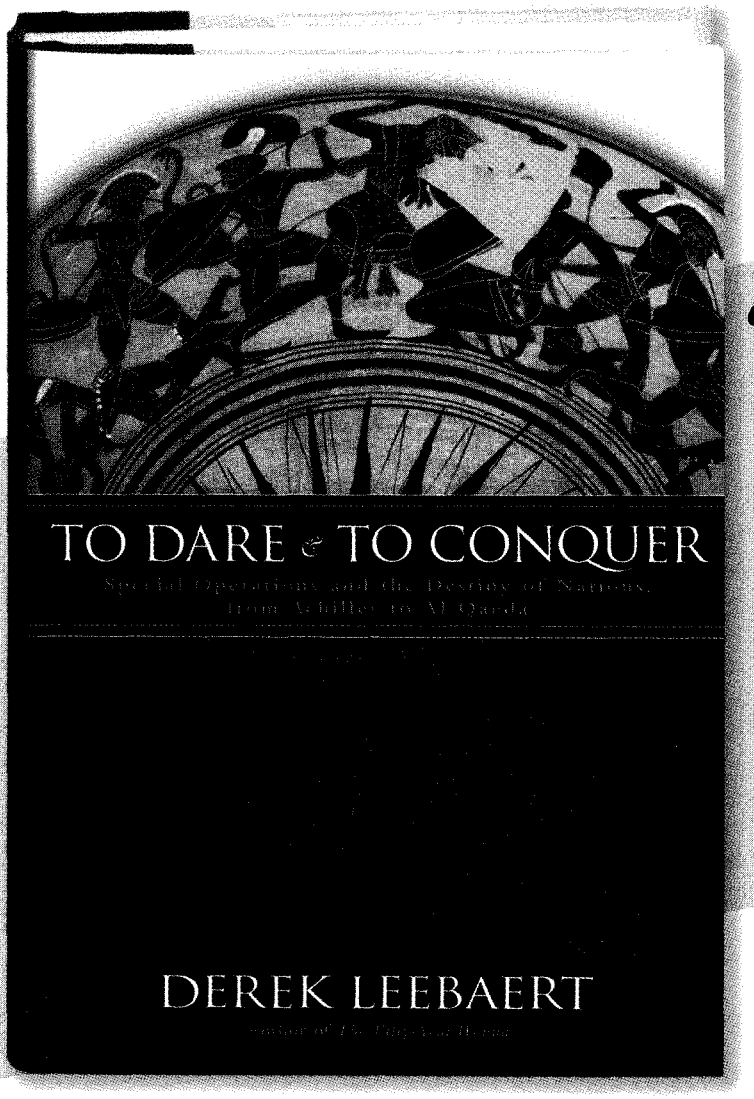


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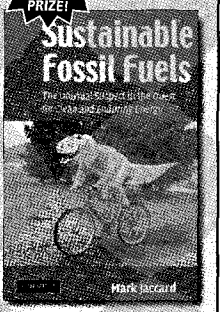


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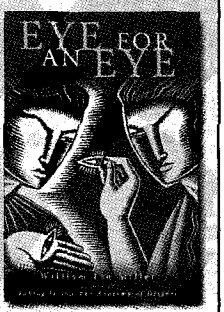


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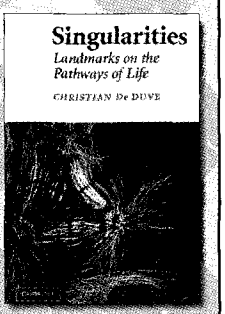


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"well-dressed women with well-dressed minds," as she liked to say, and so she recruited Kenneth Tynan as a monthly profiler ("To be given virtual *carte blanche* to run riot across the pages of *Harper's Bazaar* was about the most encouraging thing that ever happened to me as a young writer," he recalled), and in her pages helped launch the careers of Carson McCullers and Truman Capote (he became among her closest friends). It's an utterly glamorous story: the all-night shoots after the showings of the Paris collections; the junior editrixes—"tall, cool Vassar graduates," as S. J. Perelman described them—in their pillbox hats and white gloves; the languid lunches at Le Pavillion and the Colony; and the long, lovely afternoon that was Manhattan in the 1950s.

In her largely unnoticed and now forgotten 1962 memoirs, Snow told much of the tale of her career with nostalgic glee, including her notorious jump from deputy at *Vogue* to *Bazaar*, and her tough if convivial relationship with *Bazaar*'s proprietor, "The Chief," William Randolph Hearst. But Rowlands's far fuller and more detailed chronicle—conveyed in this 500-page, beautifully designed (so much white space!) book—is exhilarating, at least for those with an interest in fashion and in what that former *Vogue* staffer Joan Didion called the "effortlessly glossy" look and tone of the bygone rag mags.

Still, although Rowlands writes discerningly on the haut monde and on haute couture (I was gratified by her sophisticated appreciation of Edward Molyneux's at once winsome and supremely elegant designs from the thirties), she's unable or unwilling to summon a complete portrait of Snow, about whom there's clearly a complex story to tell. Snow was a liberated career woman, and she was also a purposeful social climber and a far-less-than-devoted mother. She started as a fashion editor in her thirties. She then married a high-born dullard (it was by all appearances a passionless match) and had three daughters, whom she literally seldom saw, and the last of whom Snow bore when she was forty-five. But Rowlands, whose mother married Snow's nephew, somewhat understandably fails to probe all this. Nevertheless, I found this energetic but deeply elegiac book, despite its occasional breathlessness and sloppy writing, endlessly absorbing, because it's among the most detailed, precise, and hence evocative accounts of a notoriously rarefied world.

**Yellowstone Command**, *by Jerome A. Greene* (Oklahoma). On June 25, 1876, at the Little Bighorn, 2,000 Sioux and Northern Cheyenne warriors won the most stunning victory in the history of the American Indians' struggle with whites. But by the following spring, the U.S. Army had broken the Sioux and Cheyenne, and the twenty-six-year contest for the northern plains had ended, as thousands of Indians streamed into the reservations and surrendered. Although this outcome was foreordained, few had anticipated the rapidity or totality of the Indian defeat. More than anyone else, General Nelson A. Miles was responsible for crushing the tribes.

A hero of the battles at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Appomattox, Miles had two years earlier conclusively defeated the Comanche, the Kiowa, and the Southern Cheyenne in the Red River War. The most successful Indian fighter in American history (after a century of relative scholarly neglect, he was from 1989 to 1998 the subject of no fewer than three academic biographies, which is really two too many), he would later beat Chief Joseph of the Nez Percé and Geronimo of the Apache; he would also put down the Pullman strike and serve as commanding general of the Army during the Spanish-American War. Miles was a courageous, energetic, highly competent, aggressive, and hard-driving field commander; he was also a world-class self-promoter and a jealous and petty infighter, all of which made him less than popular with his fellow officers, a group with whom he was competitive to the point of paranoia.

When Miles, with the Fifth Infantry under his command, entered the Sioux country following Custer's defeat, his charge was to maintain an Army presence deep in the hostiles' territory throughout the winter—itself a difficult



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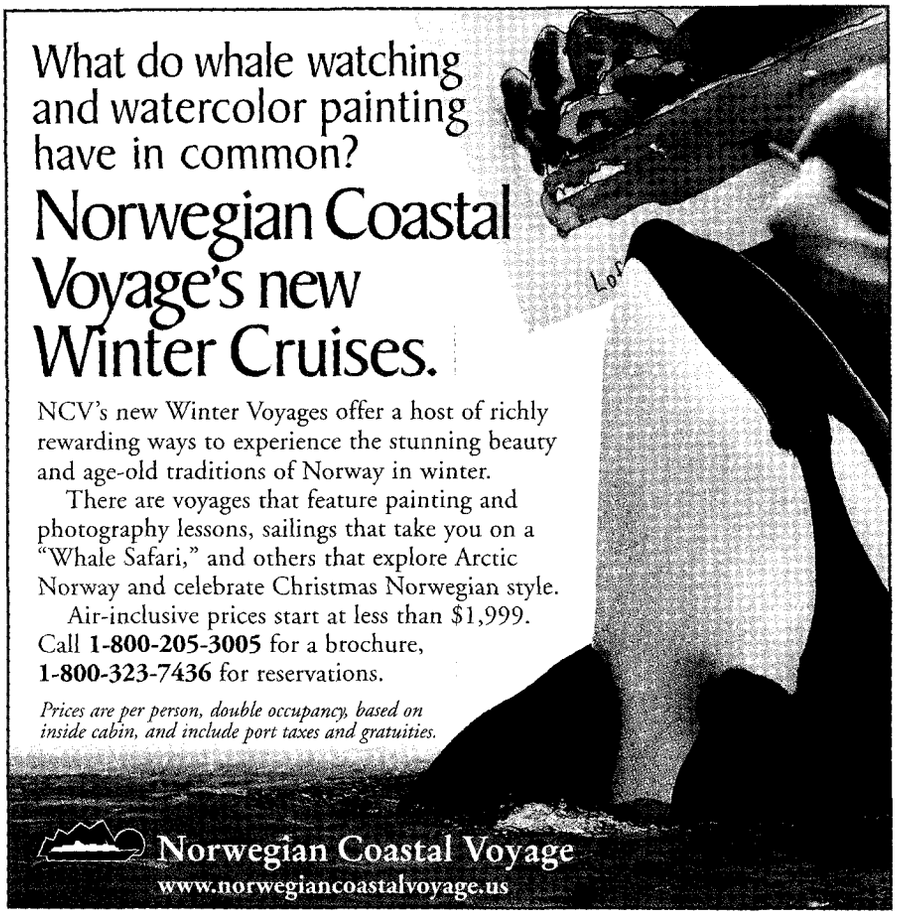
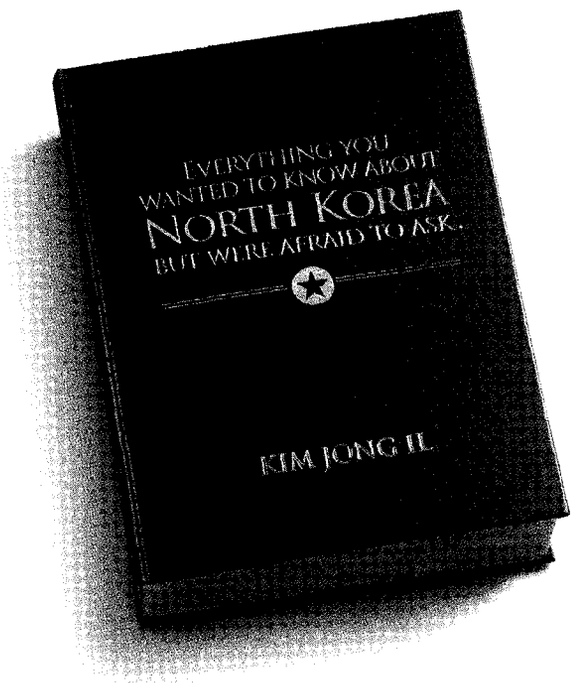
and unprecedented endeavor. But rather than remain in their cantonment on a tributary of the Yellowstone River, Miles and his troops relentlessly pursued the Sioux and Cheyenne through the blizzards and sub-zero temperatures of the northern plains. Thrown off balance, warriors were transformed from feared fighters into hunted fugitives. Women, children, and ponies weakened as food and provender dwindled. These conditions intensified the endemic factionalism that beset the tribes; they were soon fatally enfeebled from without and from within. In a series of engagements, Miles bested his opponents (most significantly at the battle of the Wolf Mountains, which, though indecisive, shook the resolve of Crazy Horse's and Sitting Bull's forces), but it was his dogged pressure, not his victories on the battlefield, that defeated the Indians.

Unglamorously methodical, Miles's campaign is among the most successful feats of unconventional warfare in the history of the U.S. military (it was so described by a fellow lecturer at a course on counterinsurgency I helped teach at the U.S. Air Force Special Operations School years ago), but until recently historians have devoted little attention to it, compared with, say, Custer's hardly victorious but far more romantic efforts. This book, first published in 1991 and just re-released in paperback, is a model of military history. A historian with the National Park Service, Greene judiciously and inventively weighs his evidence (many of his sources were previously unexamined), elucidates Miles's campaign strategy, and meticulously reconstructs the grueling marches and battles of the winter of 1876–77. His efforts are informed throughout by an exquisite sensitivity to the topography and climate of southeastern Montana. This is among the most realistic books on war that I've read: it explicates not the horror and drama of battle but the hard slog, the brutal single-mindedness of winning commanders, the blunt facts of logistics and supply, and the slow but inexorable unraveling of morale.

*Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and the national editor of* The Atlantic.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BOOKS

# Cheap Thrills

*A story of American women in financial jeopardy*

BY SANDRA TSING LOH

Apparently it's the last post-feminist taboo. So let's violate it. Just for you, my friend, today I'm going to open it wide ... My pocketbook, my purselet, my hidden *portmonee* ... Yeah, I'm going to push aside all the secret velvety folds and show you that most intimate of female parts: *my money.*

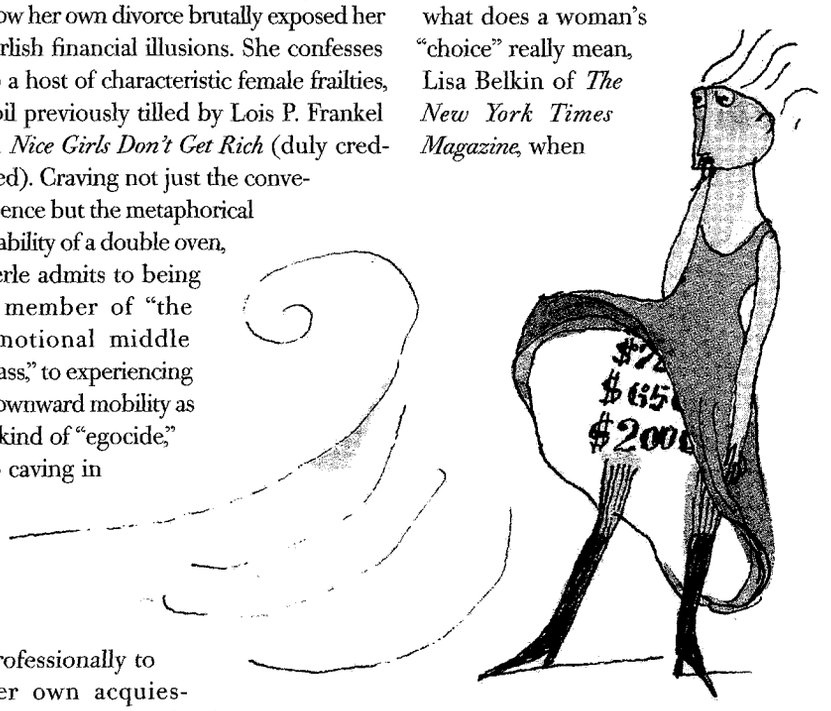
Because oddly, in this age of the blinding white Oprah pantsuit, when everything is illuminated, it seems a Victorian lace curtain still hangs over the delicate womanly matter of our personal expenditures. But unlike most urban professional females, I'm going to rip back that curtain, I'm going to bare all, I'm going to feed you raw numbers like oysters— My husband? Him? Oh, he won't mind. As usual on weekends, he's with his favorite dominatrix, PBS's own Hell's Angel, Suze Orman. There he stands in the kitchen, obediently chopping vegetables, as from the small TV the saber-toothed blond androgyne berates him in her jacket of leather: "So you've been 'too busy' to figure out how a Roth IRA works, or what a FICO score is? Buddy, wake up and smell the 401(k)!"

In eras past, financial punisher Suze Orman would be a man, feelings negotiator Dr. Phil would be a woman ... But no, in the '00s, sex roles, finance roles, power roles, domestic roles—they're all up in the air! Yet still, women don that AmEx-hued fig leaf. In *Money, A Memoir*, Liz Perle describes a divorcing girlfriend seeking her advice about such complex issues as property division, child support, income lost, college funds. Perle asks—but gets no answer to—what her friend actually spends in a month. After hemming and hawing, the friend finally admits: "I do know, and I'm too embarrassed to tell you. What I need and what I spend are two different things." Writes Perle:

> As I hung up the phone, it struck me that I know more about my friends' sexual assets than their financial ones. They've never hesitated to tell me all about love affairs, dreams, disappointments—even their husbands' most minute physical, moral, mental, and sexual failings—but I have no idea what any of them earn or spend each month.

Of course, here's the rub: after reading Perle's "tell-all" memoir, you still have no idea what *Perle* earns or spends in a month. Yes, she writes candidly about how her own divorce brutally exposed her girlish financial illusions. She confesses to a host of characteristic female frailties, soil previously tilled by Lois P. Frankel in *Nice Girls Don't Get Rich* (duly credited). Craving not just the convenience but the metaphorical stability of a double oven, Perle admits to being a member of "the emotional middle class," to experiencing downward mobility as a kind of "egocide," to caving in professionally to her own acquiescent "inner stewardess" (who's too polite to protest a bad job assignment or lobby for a raise). It's fertile, relatable territory—what woman, feeling blue, hasn't practiced retail therapy (during PMS, how often have I fondled aromatherapy candles named "Tranquility," rosemary soaplets startlingly named "Refresh!")? What XX-chromosomed human hasn't hoped her dreadlocked spoken-word barista may one day transform into a (still soulful) stockbroker with a bulging portfolio? (For one singleless in Perle's book, saving money is actually painful—it's an admission that "no one is coming to take care of her.")

Over this garden of female neuroses is laid the larger template of American Women in Financial Jeopardy ... a topic I'm finding increasingly troubling, gnawing. Just the previous week, I'd been reading *Getting Even*, by a former lieutenant governor of Massachusetts, Evelyn Murphy, with E. J. Graff. Until then, I'd considered myself pretty well versed in the depressing rills and contours of the gender wage gap. I knew that almost fifty years after Betty Friedan sounded the gender-equality alarum, U.S. women still make just 77 cents to the dollar of U.S. men ... I knew about the lifetime million-dollar "Mommy Tax" (Ann Crittenden, *The Price of Motherhood*) ... I knew about the glass ceiling, either real or self-"chosen." But what does a woman's "choice" really mean, Lisa Belkin of *The New York Times Magazine*, when the job demands *eighty hours a week*? And how many dual-Harvard-M.B.A. divorce settlements could have gone *so much better* if the female Harvard M.B.A. had just *stayed working*? I was already seeing us women in a whirling estrogen maelstrom, *Perils of Pauline*–like, greenbacks flying madly about our heads as though in a wind tunnel—I pictured us like in that scene in *Thelma and Louise*, where the money *whips* from a tearful Geena Davis's hands right out the car window.



BLAIR THORNLEY

But here was yet another layer I'd not even thought of. A laudably thorough examination of sex discrimination in the workplace, *Getting Even* probes the



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# "[A] riveting, masterfully told tale

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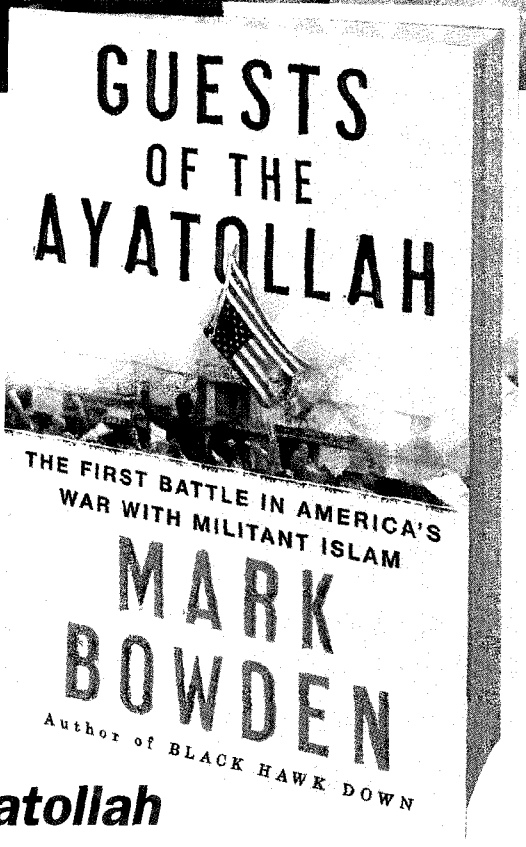


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—Douglas Birch, *The Baltimore Sun*

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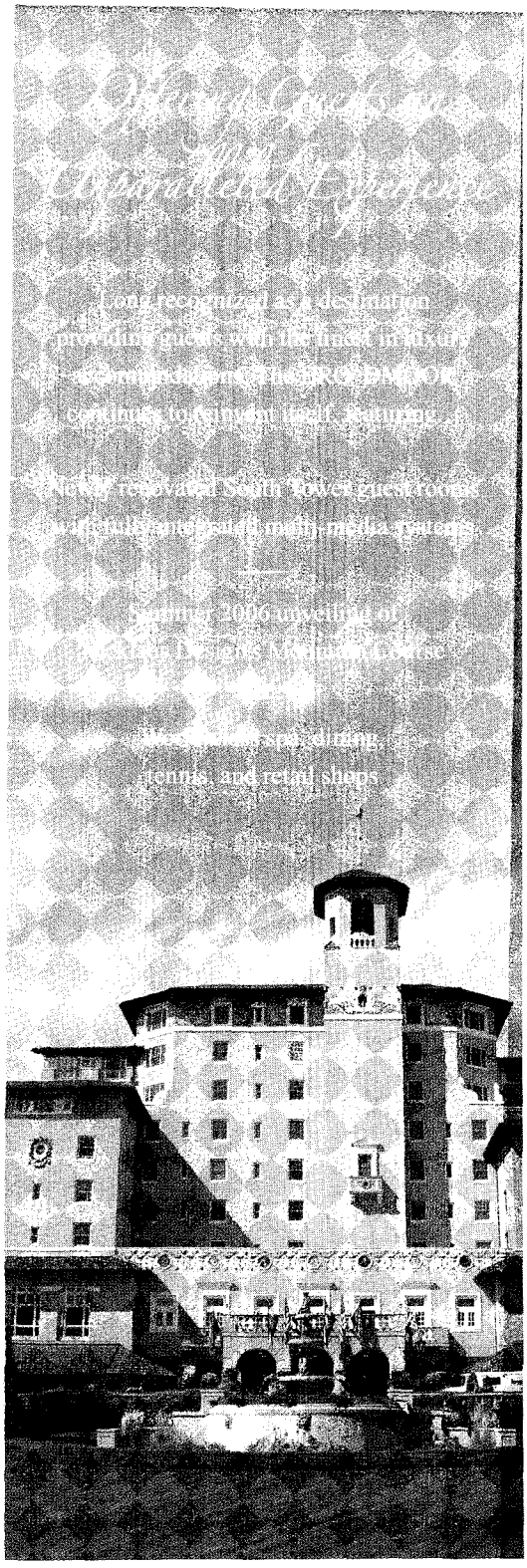

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subtle distinctions that still exist among collars blue and pink. Have you noticed that at elite restaurants, waitpersons tend to be men (better tipped and paid than waitresses at truck-stop diners)? In the aisles of Home Depot, do you see more male employees than female ones? (Salesmen make more than cashiers; cultural biases remain around which sex excels at selling paint chips.) Are you aware that on construction sites, even women fully capable of operating those … Caterpillar … thingies … must fight much harder to get those good union jobs by proving they're physically strong enough to pull up (down?) that gearshift … clutch … dealio—argh!

I felt horrible frustration reading *Getting Even*, both because of the social injustice and because, with my imperfect attention (I kept thinking of that money *whipping* out the car window!), I found the book itself so hard to concentrate on. It was a trip to Barbara Ehrenreich Land without Barbara Ehrenreich. I felt awful for the minimum-wage-earning women in their Wal-Mart vests, standing exhausted under the fluorescents; I felt sorrow for their unremitting bad luck, both in life and in literature. It seemed unfair that slogging through their book required ropes, huskies, snowshoes. By contrast, here I was devouring Liz Perle's middle-class confessional divorce memoir like it was a piece of porn, a Harold Robbins beach book. Even *Money*'s Women in Financial Jeopardy statistics mesmerized me: more than half of retired women live in poverty, 58 percent of Boomer females have less than $10,000 in a pension or 401(k) plan. (My own "retirement funds" currently stand at a mere $6K—down from $12K—in a wheezing little IRA. I call him "my Ira," my little Jewish codger who keeps yelling "Feh—my knees!" while osteoporosis shrinks him yearly.)

In the end, however, *Money* fell short of satisfying me. After all those hazy female anecdotes, metaphors, and statistics, I wanted the Money Shot—I wanted to look at it, to see Perle's own Quicken Bill-Pay file open spread-eagle before me. The only numbers she let drop were $2,500 a month in San Francisco for "a dark two-bedroom shoe box on the ground floor in a dicey neighborhood" and $5,000 for her son's "sweet hippy preschool." Five thousand, eh? Per month? Per year? Do they pay more for organic? What?

But no. Still doing a skillful three-card monte behind her Dance of the Seven Feminist Rhetorical Veils, Perle insisted, "I've talked to women who make $30,000 a year and women who pull in $300,000 annually who feel equally hungry and equally insecure."

**MONEY, A MEMOIR: Women, Emotions, and Cash**
*by Liz Perle*
Henry Holt and Co.

**GETTING EVEN: Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men—and What to Do About It**
*by Evelyn Murphy, with E. J. Graff*
Touchstone

**NOT BUYING IT: My Year Without Shopping**
*by Judith Levine*
Free Press

All right, then. Barring women of genuinely modest means—those who make less than $30,000 a year, who drive ten-year-old cars or take the bus, who rent apartments, who have tumbled terrifyingly into the health-insurance abyss, who, for goodness' sake, are reading this very magazine between laminated covers at the public library—herewith my modest proposal.

What if, instead of trying to change the still-male-dominated worlds of government and business and contemporary work culture from the top down, we American Women in Financial Jeopardy went the other way? To fill our womanly coffers with the cash we need, what if—in a group strike à la *Lysistrata*—we all just said no to … *buying stuff we don't need*?

*That* would stick it to the Man!

Wait, no, think about it—clearly, it's the synergistic forces of capitalism, corporations, and consumerism that are driving our lives down into a spiraling hell. But, looking at it another way, we're actually pressing our Manolo Blahniks to the accelerator. We women make the lion's share of household purchases in this country. We ourselves drive billions of dollars a year in sales. Without the army of us and our Visa cards … ?

Because the fact is—not to take anything away from the women who make $300,000 a year and still feel hungry—

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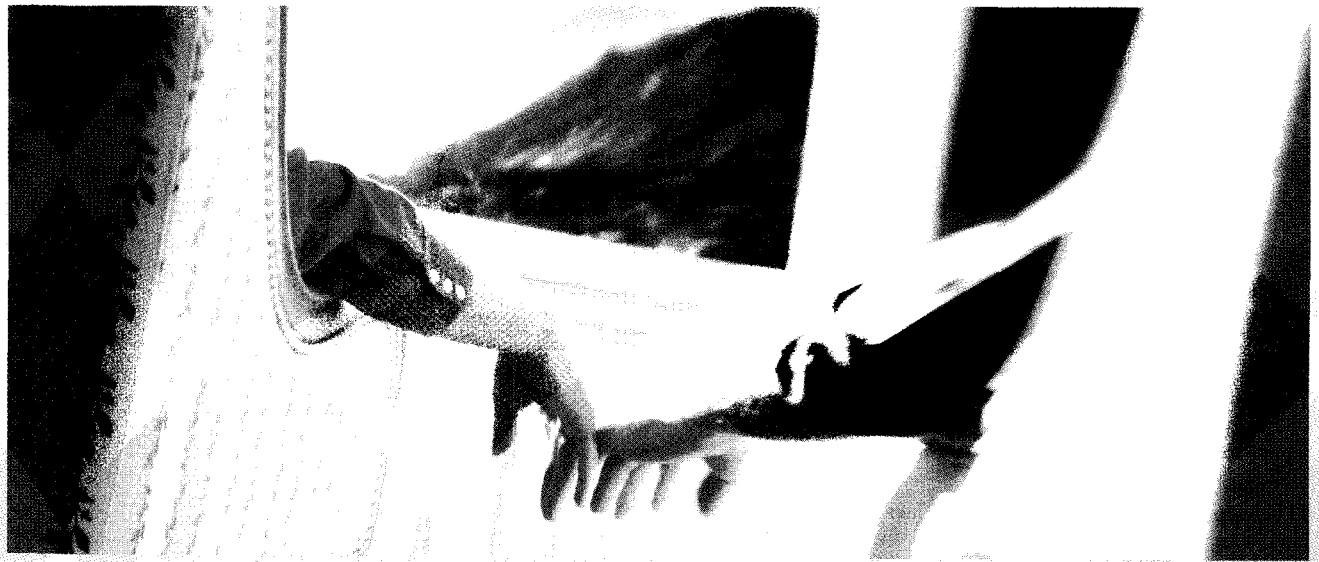

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we do happen to live, as you may have noticed, in a country of choking abundance. Our 99-cent stores are Wonders of the World. Food is so cheap, even our pets are obese. The bears in our parks practically require cholesterol medicine. Do you understand? Even our trash is fattening! Things need shaking up when American women feel endangered even as Yosemite bears lumber around belching, their eyes glazed with surfeit, their pelts covered in Oreo crumbs.

Yeah, I see us women piling into our SUVs, our Volvos, our minivans—hell, even our cute little lime-green VW Bugs—and driving out to the desert … Grrrls doing it for themselves, all together. We could get off the grid! We'll dump the cars, change into sarongs … go barefoot … drop out … unplug … start our own Burning Woman festival! At the very least, we could burn our bras! Which would probably take a full month, because by now we have so damn many of them. (Over the years, from Victoria's Secret alone, I've bought Angel bras, T-shirt bras, Wonder bras, Miracle bras—I have so many bras, I could make my own giant bra ball.)

I grant it will be difficult to get the word out about this burgeoning new women's movement. There will be no glossy new Condé Nast magazine celebrating us. There will be no sitcoms about us, standing around, not drinking Diet Coke. Could we get on *Dr. Phil*? *Oprah*? "Women Who've Stopped Spending." I can't picture it. I don't even see us blogging on urbanbaby.com about the thrills of buying nothing—our posts would be blocked (if adorably, one little hand up) by Baby Gap (and look at that striped wool mitten with the pom-pom!).

**What XX-chromosomed human hasn't hoped her dreadlocked spoken-word barista may one day transform into a (still soulful) stockbroker with a bulging portfolio?**

But perhaps humbly, on these pages, I can share one woman's story: my own. After all, I did promise you a journey deep into my pocketbook. Although I do hate to open it. Because I happen to be, yes … *the world's cheapest woman.*

Let me explain how I got this way—how I became this utter marvel—at age forty-four, in Los Angeles. To start with, professionally speaking, frugality is an absolute necessity. My guitarist husband, Mike, and writer me are the old-fashioned kind of bohemians. Not 'fro-haired hipsters gyrating in iPod ads but the sort who, starting January 1 of every year, literally don't know where their next dime is coming from. That's right: we're the kind of creative free spirits who buy their own health insurance ($500 a month). Over the eighteen years we've lived together, my annual income has ranged wildly, from $9,000 to (in the one surreal year of mirage-like TV pilots) $250,000. We pay cash for everything, including cars. Our house is paid off—not so amazing when you realize we bought it for $239,000 seventeen years ago. Of course it's also 1,300 square feet, and now that we have two daughters, there are four of us in residence.

But here again, the silver lining. The financial upside of living in a too-small house is that you stop buying things, because there's no place to put them. Thanks to our girls, free stuff keeps coming to us anyway, stuff upon stuff. Joyous gifts of clothes, books, toys … The other weekend, I spent three hours on my knees scooping up what I call "piñata chum," the candies and jacks and half-broken tops and balls and SpongeBob stickers that continually trail in from birthday parties of children I cannot even name. A tiny living space is the perfect cure for materialism when brute objects get in the way of such basic human needs as being able to find your mail or sit down while eating.

Of course, one could argue that I'm lucky—I'm genetically inclined toward thrift, coming as I do from an insanely cheap immigrant family. It's true that by now my siblings and I simply enable each other. I'll give as Christmas gifts publishers' galleys I got in the mail. (If they're good, why not?) My sister recently topped that by placing under the tree a book she'd checked out from the San Francisco public library, with the stipulation that my brother finish it quickly so she could return it. But the master of parsimony remains my eighty-five-year-old, Shanghai-born, retired-scientist dad. He doesn't just Dumpster dive; he'll go to his local Starbucks and pour the latte dregs of others into a discarded Starbucks cup and then quaff the whole lukewarm mess right there, while enjoying his also-stolen-from-Starbucks *New York Times* (to class things up a bit, I guess).

I grant that at a certain point such behavior moves from thrift to eccentricity, even health hazard (never mind how my dad fertilizes his lawn; although I must say, for eighty-five, the man has an astonishing immune system). In my twenties and thirties, I openly rebelled against all this *Sanford and Son*–like penny-pinching. Spreading my wings, forging my own identity, I was fascinated with the taboo of luxury, of buying expensive things. And so (particularly in the $250,000 year of mirage-like TV deals), I threw down! Instead of cheesy white $5 plastic chairs from Home Depot, how about some quality outdoor pieces made of Brazilian teak—$1,500? Well, it turned out that the two lounge chairs, like fussy pedigreed dogs, required constant grooming (oiling, actually), and—as I like to say in California—I am my own Mexican. I found myself becoming the full-time employee of the fussy teak chairs. I'd spend my afternoons scanning the sky worriedly. Was rain coming? Should I—with much shin bumping and lower-back wrenching—move the chairs into the shed? With then another oiling? I was becoming a slave, a Slave of Teak—and it irked me.

Also, driving through Big Sur over many years, I'd become curious about the Post Ranch Inn. All one could see from the road below was a misty green hill rising up beyond a gate. The Post Ranch Inn's cliff-side retreats were $700 a room and up. And so what? "Seven hundred dollars a room!" I told my husband,


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arms akimbo, legs planted like Yul Brynner, flush with my Hollywood cash. "For just once in my life, I want to know what a $700 room is like!" I found out. The SUV ride up the hill? Thrilling. The moss-roofed entry port? Magical. The room? A veritable aerie boasting a 180-degree Pacific Ocean view, a stone fireplace, a slate tub, every surface discreetly touched with perfect northern California appointments—exotic teas, eucalyptus bath salts twined in raffia, Bose sound system with DMX ... "No!" I snapped at my husband as he leaned over the dials. "Miles Davis we can have at home!" I jabbed my finger toward the skylight, dropped my voice to a whisper: "What we're paying for is the birds, the susurrus of the birds, the natural Pacific birds." He opened his mouth as if to speak, but I shushed him. "Don't you understand? We can't *afford* conversation," I hissed, my Shanghai blood roaring in my ears, its eternal abacus clacking. "At $45 an hour, what we're paying for is the silence, the natural Zen silence!"

Which brings us to the fact that being neurotic is expensive. Amid the crazily sleep-starved wars of the first baby, Mike and I booked ourselves into therapy. But we soon realized we could stop fighting, find a way to divide the household labor, and save the $120 a session—our health insurance being no dental, no mental. (Since you ask, this is what we came up with: he does all the cooking and cleaning and laundry, and in reward gets to be very bossy and curt about it, and we also have to eat whatever he feels like all the time—lots of fish. I do the bills.)

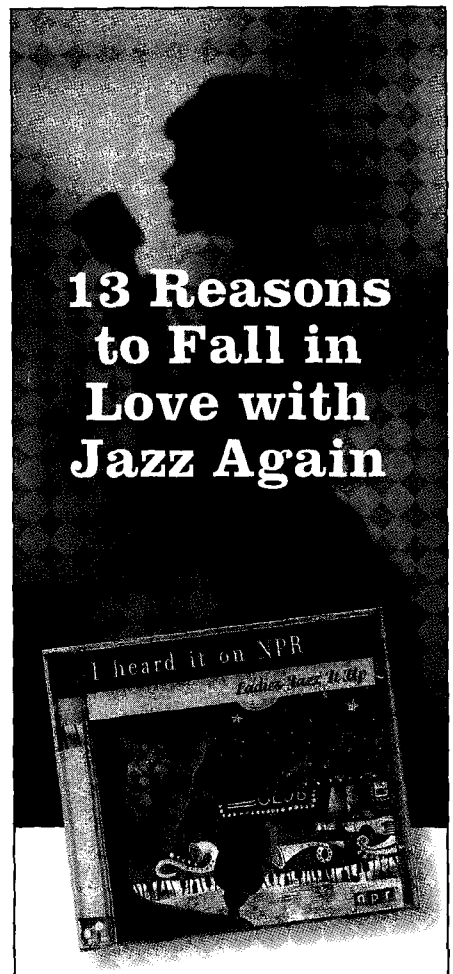
These are just household things, though—issues of circumstance, fate of genetics. Truly cheap people are, in their secret hearts, individuals. Iconoclasts. Rebels. Always oppressed, always breaking out, with some kind of personal "crazy philosophy" (my dad's term, eyebrows lifted, twirling index finger at the temple). I think the most colorful intro to mine is via one of my favorite novels, Pearl S. Buck's *Pavilion of Women*. On her fortieth birthday, after serving two decades as a faithful wife and mother, the matriarch of a great house in China announces to her husband that she's done with having sex. She's finding him a young concubine, and is in fact that day moving to another pavilion so she can sit in the library and read books.

I'm fully aware that our 1,300-square-foot bungalow cannot house a young concubine. (Look at me: I'm already doing the math. I'm figuring that young women being what they are today, our concubine would probably also require therapy, fiction-writing classes, spa treatments, the rosemary soap, the Tranquility candles. Forget it!) But what I relate to in this character is the great weariness suddenly felt, midlife, with the trappings of being female. For instance, at forty-four ... I'm tired of looking at myself in the mirror. I'm so bored with it! My God, I've been looking at this face for decades now. When will the tedium end?

It wasn't always like this. At age thirty-six, in the year of the mirage-like TV pilots, I found myself many mornings at 10 a.m. riding glass-walled elevators to a lot of frightening meetings with a lot of fresh-faced young people. In multiple fun-house reflections, I could see that I looked like a hound dog, Leonard Nimoy–esque. Those eye bags haunted me day and night. So I paid $3,000 and had them lasered right out.

But here came the strange part. The procedure was so quick, so simple, so painless, and so effective—I looked fabulous, no one could deny it—that my outer appearance actually ... began to unravel. Not just the bags but the scales fell from my eyes. For a decade I had cosseted my eye bags like royal invalids—creaming them, lotioning them (after reading a tip in a beauty magazine, I even tried smearing them with Preparation H). Now that I was free ... there, there, there on the bathroom counter! That busy, self-important cityscape of skin revitalizers, moisturizers, scrubs, washes, lifters, exfoliants. I suddenly saw that dusty shantytown for what it was: an utter sham! With one sweep of my arm, I razed it. I threw those Clinique and Nivea jars and tubes away, every single one!

When I was the servant of the eye bags (and they my master), oh ... I used to be so hunched over, in apology for my hideous presence. I wouldn't dare leave the house without my hair meticulously styled, makeup labored over,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wearing what I hoped—prayed!—were my hippest outfits. But now, with the eye bags gone, it was like my female debt was finally, suddenly paid in full. And now the pendulum was swinging wildly the other way. With the worthless cosmetics gone, what else could I do away with? Ideas were flying to me. Why wear earrings, why put on lipstick, why even—the sloth that dare not speak its name—*change out of the clothes you slept in*? I have this pair of $10 black drawstring Target pants that balance perilously on culture's very Mother Who Works From Home fulcrum. Are they running pants? Exercise pants? Pajamas? Who knows? Then again, check out this Ann Taylor striped T-shirt I'm wearing—Goodwill, $1! (That's right, one dollar. Don't mean to brag, but I paid for it in quarters!) As for my fabulous shoes, they're probably German and expensive, but for me? Free! Because like all my shoes, they're cast-offs! That's the upside of having girlfriends who are rabid shoe buyers. It's such trouble to go back to Nordstrom's to return a color they don't like; it's easier just to ... give the shoes to me. Thanks!

Because it's not new clothes I hate so much as clothes shopping. Several decades in, it is the mall itself that has become wearisome to me—depressing, odious, exhausting. Glowering down from all around are posters not just of ten-foot-tall eighteen-year-old supervixens, but of men! Even in Victoria's Secret! Men of rock-hard pecs, gelled hair, curled lip! How gay are our Madison Avenue ad executives?

Speaking of which, one day it hit me how much I'd come to physically dread going to my pricey salon. The faux-antiqued walls, the *WWD* magazines, the jumping club-kid haircutters (who are by now actually north of forty, just like me). The owner of the salon is Taz—that's the name of the salon, "Taz"—and it suddenly struck me how sick to death I was of hearing about Taz. Taz was here, Taz was there, Taz was in South Beach, Taz was on a shoot in Arizona ... where he was developing a new line of "product" including some $30 chi-flavored botanical serum I'd have to, as usual, fake interest in. You know what, Taz? They're just split ends. Fuck off.

Then there's the whole weight project. My friend Carolyn has lost twelve and a half pounds in the past three months. Good for her, you say, but consider what she's spending: $199 for six months at Jenny Craig, plus many little tins of food at upwards of $400 a month. And what with all the deprivation and the sensitized palate, there's the feel-good sports ion water she deserves, at $2 a bottle, of which she has several a day. New gym membership ($40 a month). New running shoes that really fit, air-spring sole, cushioned heel ($100), plus important new sports leggings, new socks, etc. To entertain her during all that treadmilling, a $299 iPod. And to celebrate a drop of two sizes, a recently purchased pair of $300 "distressed" jeans.

That's right—that's what distressed skinny jeans cost now: $300. Carolyn tried on jeans at the mall for three hours before she finally found the right snug fit. Let's not even count the new high-heeled strappy shoewear to go with the jeans, the $120 haircut with highlights. (I admit—when she asked, I sent her to Taz!) Carolyn's self-esteem is glowing. She's going out more at night. She's contemplating a vacation, maybe a cruise, with salsa dancing, windsurfing, parasailing. There's more confidence, laughter, tossing the head back.

In America today, I can't think of one person who wouldn't pump the air and say, "You go, girl!" I can't name one female self-help book that urges you, now that you're forty, to simply accept ... the extra seven pounds (talk about egocide). If we were all wearing sarongs, no one would know the difference—that's why we need skinny jeans. When it comes to oppression, jeans are our burka, our religion, our god. We labor for the jeans, we starve for the jeans, we pray to the jeans that they'll close ... The fact that we're paying $300 is only good news. Female emancipation is always defined in terms of expanding our economic presence. Our personal power is defined by our earning, our cultural power by purchasing, how we vote with our dollars.

Which is to say, conversely, the woman who buys nothing *is* nothing.

Nothing ... nothing ... nothing.

I resent it bitterly, and I am in revolt.



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However, having now made a $25 purchase at Borders last week, it is I who gaze in awe. It is I who wave the saggy old bra in salute. Because it turns out there's a new mistress of the shabby pavilions, a new Queen of Cheap! She is New York writer Judith Levine, and I so enjoyed her new book, *Not Buying It*, that I'll be "gifting" my copy on this Christmas, in turn, to each member of my penurious family.

Nauseated not just by her own maxed credit cards but by her weakness in a hyperconsumerized world, Levine decided to try to survive, for one year, on just "essentials"—a strategy that saved her $8,000 (out of a gross income of $45,000). Yes, there was a diabetic cat requiring expensive veterinary care, and no, Levine's vanity (which I respected her for fessing up to) would not allow her to give up her $55 haircuts. But beyond that, the strictures were urban-spartan. She and her partner, Paul, were to buy no clothes or shoes. There would be no restaurants, movies, gifts. They could buy groceries, but not fancy ones. Toilet paper, yes; Q-tips, no (this impressed me—I consider Q-tips essential).

Levine's yearlong Visa-free journey reveals a hitherto-invisible realm. Without the whirl of buying, vast quantities of time open up—and not just from a lack of purchased entertainment; consuming itself takes time. (In *The Paradox of Choice*, Barry Schwartz illustrates how we can fritter our days away even on trying to choose the best price for something on the Internet.) But perhaps Levine's most pointed observations are political. She is no fan of Bush—he who advised patriotic citizens, post-9/11, to go shopping. But she's troubled too with her fellow Democrats' click-and-buy approach to political organizing.

> If participating in the election by joining MoveOn or Concerned Women for America is not as satisfying as shopping, it feels a little like using an Apple computer or wearing Nike shoes—what Merkely + Partners brand manager Douglas Atkins calls "joining a brand." The twenty-first-century political group is not a group in the human sense. It has no voice, no flesh. There is no room to meet in, no one to meet. You send your money (or not), you get your e-mails (just like your software updates and porn-site come-ons), you "buy in" to the organization's politics.

Meaning that "Kerry" (windsurfing gunboat captain, Ivy League union supporter) was simply a brand that didn't work. These days, Americans are not citizens so much as consumers; says one friend of Levine's, "What's left of the counterculture is the counter."

That's not entirely true, of course. There are those eco-footprint fetishists (almost always white males, natch) who retreat to little dwellings in the woods (notably often the woods of Vermont) to compost and crack their own wheat berries and tinker ad nauseam with revolting gadgets like batteries powered by their own pee—all while doing a lot of calculations about how much "nature" they need to sustain their lifestyle. Generally these types like to keep their income "below taxable level," in the words of Vermont conservationist Jim Merkel, a reformed weapons engineer and the author of the veritable bible of eco-footprint reduction, *Radical Simplicity*. "Then," as he says, "not a single cent of mine would rain bombs and bullets onto peasants who live near coveted resources." Of course, taxes sometimes go toward good things—bridges, schools, and ... well, never mind. Idaho Panhandle, meet the Green Mountains.

But women have a whole different style of going "off the grid." Men like to live alone in a rusty old school bus in Vermont, whereas for women (OK, white women), the romance, the adventure, of getting off the grid comes through travel abroad, away from America's Jeans Nation. I'm thinking now of Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love* and Rita Golden Gelman's *Tales of a Female Nomad*. The narrative always begins with an affluent urban woman weeping alone in her creature-comfort-filled home with the as-though-slugged-in-the-stomach pain of knowing her marriage will end in divorce. She emerges on a whirlwind journey of Third World villages that always, wonderfully enough, involves Bali. Common tropes include sumptuous weight gain, deep conversations with barefoot shaman-type medicine men,

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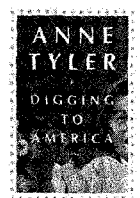
## NEW FICTION

*Finds and flops*

BY ELIZABETH JUDD

In her stupendously wise and very funny seventeenth novel, Anne Tyler tackles the ambitious subject of national character without leaving the confines of Baltimore. At the airport, two Korean infants are delivered to two eagerly awaiting adoptive families: Ziba and Sami Yazdan, a prosperous Iranian-American couple, and Bitsy and Brad Donaldson, who wait with "flotillas of silvery balloons" and a boisterous entourage of relatives bearing video cameras. Enamored of all things foreign, Bitsy befriends the Yazdans only to impose on both households a well-intentioned but hokey vision of multiculturalism, dressing daughter Jin-Ho in a *sagusam* and chiding Ziba for "Americanizing" baby Susan's hairstyle. Tyler captures an essential quality of the international adoption experience—the girls' unfathomable backgrounds transform even fashion decisions into deeply symbolic acts, subject to earnest debate.




**DIGGING TO AMERICA**
*by Anne Tyler*
Knopf

The first half of *Digging to America* consists almost entirely of folksy social commentary; Tyler delineates her characters' foibles with such tender equanimity that this peevish reader longed for a touch of venom. Gradually, though, Sami's mother, Maryam, emerges as the novel's governing intelligence in a nuanced portrait of immigrant life (Tyler was married to the late Taghi Modarressi, an Iranian-American psychiatrist), and the saccharine element disappears. Maryam claims onlooker status to distance herself from the blithering Donaldsons and to dodge the advances of Bitsy's widowed father, but her aloofness is really ontological, an innate standoffishness familiar to Tyler's readers. Tyler, who was raised among various Quaker communities and who turned eleven before she first used a telephone, understands the powerful magic of self-imposed isolation like no other writer publishing today. *Digging to America* succeeds on many levels—as a satire of millennial parenting, a tribute to autumn romances, and, most important, an exploration of our risible (though poignant) attempts to welcome otherness into our midst.

*Elizabeth Judd is a writer in Washington, D.C.*

untrammeled sex with males of all ages (including Ecuadorian fishers).

All of which sort of confuses the issue of American Women in Financial Jeopardy. Let's face it: it's a lot cheaper to sit in the native woods and put your pee to use than it is to wander the world in search of spiritual advice and sexual catch-and-release. So, what's *really* going on here, emotio-money-wise?

Liz Perle traces her beliefs about the complex relationship between women and their money to her Yiddish-speaking grandmother. Perle remembers the day about one year after her mother had died that, driven to impart an important life lesson, her grandmother frantically rooted around in her bureau drawers, past stockings and scarves ("each new thrust released the scent of Chanel No. 5"), until finally, from deep inside an underwear drawer, she pulled out a little woven metallic coin purse. "It's a reticule ... It's something a woman wears to keep her valuables hidden," her grandmother says. "This is the beginning of your *knipple*." Perle writes:

> In my grandmother's hierarchy of what mattered in life, money silently reigned. She believed that at the end of the day, a woman's safety and security (not to mention social position) depended on it.

The phrase that leaped out at me, upon reading that, was "social position." What a stunningly unique situation modern American women are in. For perhaps the first time in the history of civilization, a woman's social position is completely fluid, hers to somehow ferret out and determine and sustain. It's not just that the West is unlike the East. (It's not just that it's unlike India, where you have an oppressive if impressively well-defined caste system, or unlike Bali, where of course so many are descended from Javanese royalty—for rapt Westerners, yet another of Bali's intoxicating-as-a-jungle-flower features.) Think how far we've come, baby, from Jane Austen's day, when women clearly understood that marriage to an alpha male was upon what their social status depended ... from brilliant ascension to Mr. Darcy's £10,000 a year at Pemberley, to the mournful poultry-tending outpost of a union with the rector Mr. Collins.

A modern American woman's social position is not so easy to calculate. If only it were still just about money—the old Yankee Protestant families, the polo ponies, the little dogs, the ladies' lunches, the charity balls, the coiffed hair, the dull face. My Los Angeles is littered with the wives of giant Hollywood Mr. Darcys who materially want for nothing, but who continue to be gnawed at by the novel that won't get written, the environmental cause that can't quite gain celebrity traction, the holistic fitness line that won't sell (it's not the money itself they need, but the prized creativity-and-success marker of the money). Nor is female professional success/independence the cure-all. I think of a novelist friend whose books unfailingly receive burnished notices in *The New York Times* (making her, literarily, extremely high-caste). The problem is that in person, people find her insufferable (at dinner parties she'll drain the life out of a room with her endless pedantic monologues, much as Elizabeth Bennet's own sister Mary would, plodding on and on with her Scotch and Irish airs). As a result, this friend can't even find her Mr. Collins—or at least not a straight one. On the flip side, I have a vivacious writer friend who lives in a trailer in Topanga who wrote a rickety (yes, Bali-inspired) chapbook several years ago to a spray of pungently mixed reviews that ran only on the West Coast. No *New York Times* mention for her, not even a capsule. And yet, she's not only an attendee but a hit—especially with flirtatious males of dubious repute, a chain of Mr. Wickhams only adding to her allure—at A-list canyon parties. In the drab wake of pretend feminism, where women share the fuzzy poncho of "sisters," this woman has social capital—which is to say access—to burn.

Jane Austen would lie down with a headache doing this calculus, which isn't really all about the money. It's about the hunger for self-definition, the terror of never knowing where you stand. In lieu of Mr. Darcy (and the ladyship of Pemberley, which I believe I would have handled quite well), at least I have this: a stale, old wedding-gift Tranquility candle.

*Sandra Tsing Loh is a writer and performer whose radio commentaries appear regularly on American Public Media's* Marketplace. *She can also be heard on KPCC-FM, in Pasadena, California.*



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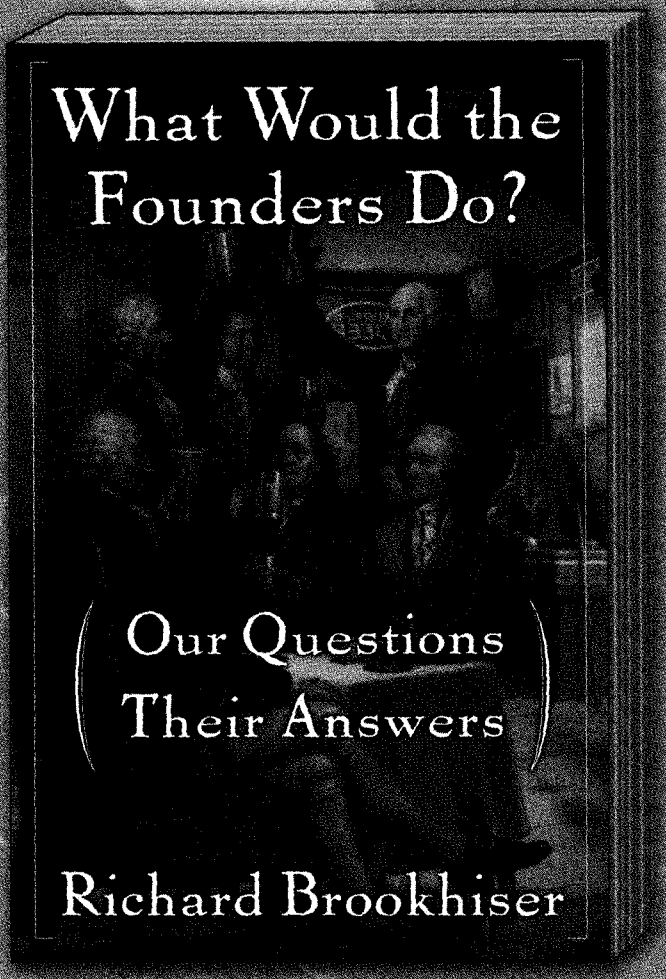


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# Summer Reading

*What some notables are stacking on their beach blankets this year*

## ALLAN GURGANUS

*Allan Gurganus is the author of the novel* Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All, *the story collection* White People, *and* The Practical Heart: Four Novellas.

Notes on Summer Books Soon to Smell of Coppertone:

I turn fifty-nine this summer: the ideal age and season for rereading. Forgetfulness has benefits; how new all college classics seem! My most recent enthusiasm is for top-drawer second-rank short-story writers. I find that, both as a writer and as a reader, these relax me as might eating endless no-cal sushi. John O'Hara, Somerset Maugham, Booth Tarkington, Saki, Alfred Chester, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, H. P. Lovecraft, Sarah Orne Jewett, Aldous Huxley, all leap to mind. Graham Greene and V. S. Pritchett's underrated short stories make ideal reading by the sea. Each cunning, hilarious, and sexy tale seems just long enough to warm you between chill bodysurfings. And I finally feel old enough to inhale Colette's short novels *Chéri* and *The Last of Chéri*. I'll now identify with the bruised vanity of the works' aging courtesan, not—as long ago—with her pitiless and slippery young man.

My writing a novel concerning one Baptist church requires my reading all lyrics from the Broadman Hymnal (1940). Not since *Dawn of the Dead* has anything proved scarier.

*Singularities: Landmarks on the Pathways of Life*, by Nobel physiologist Christian de Duve, will prove the un-beachiest of my season's nonfiction. This directly written work surveys life's molecular cosmos, speculating on its true genesis. The lucid charts and (for me) difficult mathematical formulae promise to recall my college days, for good and ill. Finally, that done, I'll take to the Atlantic a memoir by an artist I admire: actress Ellen Burstyn. Her new *Lessons in Becoming Myself* is no star turn and was not ghosted; it promises Burstyn's full emotional range, her wrenching Detroit girlhood, and a long jolt of her unaccountable nimbus.

## RONALD STEEL

*Ronald Steel's books include* Walter Lippmann and the American Century *and* In Love With Night: The American Romance With Robert Kennedy.

I plan to read Elaine Pagels's *Gnostic Gospels*. The discovery of the Judas Gospel has reminded me that I've been meaning to do so for years. Not being religiously inclined, I'd like to know a lot more about the Gnostics and their emphasis on knowledge over revelation. They sound like my kind of guys. No wonder the Church repressed them.

## CAITLIN FLANAGAN

*A staff writer at* The New Yorker, *Caitlin Flanagan is the author of* To Hell With All That: Loving and Loathing Our Inner Housewife.

*Farmer Boy*, by Laura Ingalls Wilder. The Laura Ingalls Wilder books made up the great literary cycle of my childhood; my mother and I read them over and over, starting with *Little House in the Big Woods* and reading straight through *The First Four Years* before going back to the beginning again. But we never so much as cracked the cover of *Farmer Boy*, the author's account of husband Almanzo Wilder's childhood on a farm in upstate New York. A book about a boy? Who could care less? But now I have two little boys, who have proved themselves worthy fans of Laura's childhood. It's time for them, and me, to meet the other half.

*Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's Farm*, by Betty MacDonald. When I was a child, the Internet was unborn and the interlibrary loan was in its infancy. Thus, even if a Cragmont Elementary School student loved *Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle* and *Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's Magic*, and if she saw, right on the cover of both books, that there was another title in the series, there was no way for her to get her hands on it. A rumor developed within the tribe of Piggle-Wiggle fans at Cragmont that the library didn't carry *Farm* because it wasn't any good. This summer, my boys and I are going to find out.

*Story of O*, by Pauline Réage. Because if not now, when?

## DALE PECK

*Dale Peck is a novelist and critic. His books include* Martin and John *and* Hatchet Jobs: Writings on Contemporary Fiction.

I'm heading to a writing colony for six weeks, so I've been carefully considering

JASON GREENBERG



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what to bring. Top of the list is Henry James's *Ambassadors*. I've wanted to reread it since I read *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, which references it three or four times.

I'm reading Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* right now, and packing William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* to follow it up. And then I'll leaf through a classic grammar called *The Trivium*, by Sister Miriam Joseph, because I want a more formal understanding of basic rhetoric. The one contemporary book I plan on taking is Mike Davis's *Planet of Slums*.

## LYNDA OBST

*A producer at Paramount Pictures, Lynda Obst is the author of* Hello, He Lied: & Other Truths From the Hollywood Trenches. *Her movies include* Sleepless in Seattle, The Siege, Contact, How to Lose a Guy in Ten Days, Hope Floats, The Fisher King, *and* Flashdance.

This notion of summer reading presumes I have a summer of leisure in which to read at the beach or something, to which I say, *Alas*—or, in Hollywood parlance, *As if*. But if I do have such a summer, and can get away, I'll take one or more of the following books, which I bought this year and which sit staring at me from my bedroom bookshelf, reproachfully.

I'm developing a sci-fi project with the astrophysicist Kip Thorne, involving wormholes, gravitational waves, and getting lost in multiverses. So that I can understand what we're doing, I'll browse/read Lisa Randall's *Warped Passages*. When I get frustrated with that, I'll pick up *Einstein's Unfinished Symphony*, by Marcia Bartusiak, for the same reason. Since this has fewer equations, I'll read more of it.

I've been dying to read *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, Amos Oz's memoir of growing up in Israel. I admire his unblinking yet loving way of looking at his homeland, where I've never been, though it feels as familiar as my own neighborhood when I read anything he writes.

I'll read Allegra Goodman's *Intuition*—again—because like all her books, which I get the day they come out, it went by way too fast. Scientific fraud and self-deception intersect in this impeccably executed, graceful narrative. (I may foolishly try to make it into a movie, which it isn't.)

Then I might read *Veronica*, by Mary Gaitskill. I actually found two separate copies in my house, so I must really want to read it.

## JOSEPH O'NEILL

*A regular contributor to* The Atlantic, *Joseph O'Neill is the author of* Blood-Dark Track: A Family History *and the novels* This Is the Life *and* The Breezes.

On a pebbled Turkish beach, I shall read: mournfully, *That They May Face the Rising Sun*, the last novel of John McGahern, who died this year; expectantly, a galley of a first novel by Katherine Min, *Secondhand World* (due out in October); and for the umpteenth time, and with an eye toward an epigraph for my novel-in-completion, my old copy of C. L. R. James's *Beyond a Boundary*, a rapturous memoir of West Indian cricket and so much more.

## TOM FORD

*The former creative director of Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent, and formerly the vice chairman of the management board of Gucci Group, Tom Ford currently heads his own film production company, Fade to Black.*

I'll start with *Party of the Century: The Fabulous Story of Truman Capote and His Black-and-White Ball*, by Deborah Davis. I'm lucky to have known Capote, and his Black and White Ball was one of the most talked-about social events of the sixties. In photographs it looks quite tame by today's party standards, and of course there is something silly about a grown man being so obsessed with social standing and gossip. Yet the way that Truman manipulated people during this stage of his life is fascinating. This book covers the party, and the planning of it, in the most minute detail.

Another book I want to read this summer is *Crashing the Gate: Netroots, Grassroots, and the Rise of People-Powered Politics*, by Jerome Armstrong and Markos Moulitsas Zúniga. The two bloggers who wrote it discuss why the Democrats are losing elections, and what is necessary for them to regain control.

I would also like to read *Broken Screen: 26 Conversations With Doug Aitken Expanding the Image, Breaking the Narrative*, edited by Noel Daniel. For someone as interested in contemporary visual culture as I am, the artist Doug Aitken's interviews with the likes of Robert Altman, Kenneth Anger, Matthew Barney, Rem Koolhaas, and Ed Ruscha are essential reading.

Then, for fun: *The Diviners*, Rick Moody's satire on television, the entertainment business, and American culture; Lucy Ellmann's hysterical-sounding *Doctors & Nurses*; and finally, *The Accidental*, by Ali Smith, about a stranger who manipulates and seduces the members of a family, and which sounds like an update of Pier Paolo Pasolini's film *Theorem*.

## MONA SIMPSON

*Mona Simpson is the author of four novels, including* Anywhere But Here *and* Off Keck Road.

This summer I want fun. I'm half-Syrian, so I want to read more about women in the Arab world, starting light, with *Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia*, by Jean P. Sasson, and ending with journals written by Jesuits who taught in Syria during the 1930s and '40s.

In August I often visit Wisconsin, where I spent most of my childhood. But this year I'm staying home, so I've ordered Maureen Daly's *Seventeenth Summer*, a girls' book I remember reading in my teens, which is set in Wisconsin. It teeters on the edge of being a young-romance novel, then tips into something less fitted and lovely, with ragged edges, dangerous class differences, and real sex. I remember feeling scared, thrilled, and a little disgusted. When I absently searched for it on Abebooks, I discovered that the reading experience I thought was obscure, and exclusively my own (I'd never met anyone else who'd heard of the book), was dazzlingly common. The book has been continuously in print since its publication in 1942. And the author, who is still alive, now resides near me, in Palm Desert, where she writes restaurant reviews for *The Desert Sun*. She married another writer, whom she first met at an autograph party for *Seventeenth Summer*. Before his death, they reread Willa Cather together.

I did the rest of my growing up on the Westside of Los Angeles, less than ten miles from where I live now, and I think I'll always write about it. So I'd like to read everything and anything written by a woman, dead or alive, who lived in this area code.

Finally, I want to dally over old hippie cookbooks—the kind that are not just collections of recipes but brief, allusive memoirs of the communes in which they were created—to find the ideal piecrust made without butter. One June long ago I ate pie every day in Montana, with my niece and her mother, in a diner just outside Glacier National Park. The waiters promised us that their secret ingredient was apple-cider vinegar.



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## JED PERL

*Jed Perl is the art critic for* The New Republic. *His most recent book is* New Art City.

I find myself more and more drawn to prose written by poets. They bring a plainspoken clarity to wildly complex emotions and ideas. And in their letters, poets often speak with a casual eloquence that I find thrilling as a reader—and provocative as a writer.

In recent years, I've been immensely excited by *The Letters of Robert Lowell*, *The Letters of Robert Duncan and Denise Levertov*, and *Just the Thing: Selected Letters of James Schuyler*. These books sent me back to Wallace Stevens's correspondence. And I've just picked up a collection of the letters of Hart Crane, which I'm looking forward to reading this summer. After that it's going to be Emily Dickinson's. And what do I hope to find in all this other people's mail? A loosening and clarifying of my own feeling for prose.

## EDWARD N. LUTTWAK

*Edward N. Luttwak's nineteen books include* The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire *and* Coup d'État. *He has served as a consultant to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force.*

I have just received an e-mail from Jon Bingen, one of Norway's leading scholars. In his message, he makes the sensational allegation that John Maynard Keynes—the Muhammad Ali of economists—achieved his world fame by stealing the Greco-Teutonic monetary theory of the obscure Professor Knapp. Author of the untranslated and impossible-to-find *Politische Theorie des Geldes*, Knapp held that money is a living object that "makes people do things." Here on the mountain pass to Tawang, in Arunachal Pradesh, with not enough bandwidth to Google it and not enough oxygen to think clearly, I cannot tell if Bingen is joking or even if Knapp ever existed. But when I return to Delhi's broad bandwidth, I fully intend to order the book and read it, and to expose Keynes as a fraud—in partnership with Bingen, of course.

## SALLY SINGER

*Sally Singer is the fashion news and features director at* Vogue.

I'm a sucker for both doomed Greenwich Village love stories and Bay Area gossip, so it will be a treat to finally read *Time Out of Mind*, the diaries of the late Leonard Michaels.

To understand a little more about the historical antecedents to contemporary globalization, I'll be reading *Inhuman Bondage*, David Brion Davis's analysis of the New World slave trade.

Finally, I'll be packing Julia Glass's big fat new novel, *The Whole World Over*, because I'm always curious to see how a long-shot National Book Award winner (Glass won in 2002 for her first book, *Three Junes*) fares the second time around.

## TERRY CASTLE

*A professor of English at Stanford, Terry Castle is a regular contributor to* The Atlantic. *Her books include* The Apparitional Lesbian *and* Courage, Mon Amie.

First, from the Obscure-Brit-Lit Department: Mary Butts's Taverner novels. (Butts—a now-mostly-forgotten experimental writer of the 1920s—was an opium addict, an occultist, a whacked-out bisexual friend of Aleister Crowley and Cocteau, a wickedly neglectful mother, an extraordinary prose stylist, and the ultimate casualty of her own enigmatic temperament.) The stories are murky and magical.

Then, on to *Myself and the Other Fellow: A Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, by Claire Harman (next to Boswell, my favorite biographer), and Alan Hollinghurst's *Line of Beauty* (great sex scenes, I'm hoping, with Mrs. Thatcher in rubber fetishwear).

Finally, being a font-a-holic (thanks to myfonts.com), I also plan to read further in my ever-expanding collection of books about typography. Except *reading* here means *just looking*: when you're obsessed with fonts, you can smugly ignore the content. Yay! Maybe, after two decades as an English teacher, I'm secretly *tired* of reading and don't want to do it anymore.

## LAURA ZISKIN

*Laura Ziskin is a producer at Columbia Pictures and a former president of Fox 2000 Pictures. Her movies include the* Spider-Man *films,* Pretty Woman, What About Bob? *and* As Good As It Gets. *She was the executive producer of the* 74th Annual Academy Awards.

I'm currently producing the third *Spider-Man* movie, and we are two-thirds through the shooting period. Consequently, I have little time to read for pleasure. (I'm an avid book buyer but a less avid reader, due to the lack of a thirty-six-hour day.)

About a year ago, my partner of twenty-one years, screenwriter Alvin Sargent, started to read to me at night, so my book consumption has dramatically increased. We're reading all of Graham Greene and a lot of James M. Cain; have finished *Middlesex*, by Jeffrey Eugenides, and a biography of Richard Feynman; and have abandoned some books a few chapters in.

Right now we're in the middle of *Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer*, by James L. Swanson. I just bought *Black Swan Green*, by David Mitchell, after being struck by the unanimously great reviews. I may wait until I finish shooting the movie to curl up and read it on my own. But more likely I'll get impatient and ask Alvin to start reading it tonight.

## PERRY ANDERSON

*An editor of* The New Left Review, *Perry Anderson is the author of numerous books, including* Lineages of the Absolutist State *and* Spectrum. *Britain's* New Statesman *has called him "the most polymathic of all our contemporary thinkers."*

I will read Edmund Burke's *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, his death-bed call for continuing, unremitting war on the French Revolution, after the twenty-eight-year-old Napoleon had led his armies to victory in Northern Italy. What apter seasonal reading, as conservative opinion in America debates double or quits in the Middle East?

## AMY HEMPEL

*Amy Hempel is the author of four collections of stories, including* Tumble Home *and* The Dog of the Marriage.

I'll read *Torpor*, by Chris Kraus, because I had so much fun reading *I Love Dick*, her boundary-blurring novel of obsession. I'll read Bernard Cooper's memoir *The Bill From My Father*, because I love everything he writes, and the essays he wrote about his father in *Truth Serum* are so moving and funny. I'll continue reading Walter Kirn's novel *The Unbinding*, as he writes it in real time for the online magazine *Slate*—because it's so inventive and such a wild experiment. Finally, I'll be rereading Grace Paley's *Collected Stories*, because reading Grace Paley can make you a better person.

## SANDRA TSING LOH

*Sandra Tsing Loh is a writer and performer whose radio commentaries appear regularly on American Public Media's* Marketplace.

I have so much reading to do all the time, there are spine-snapped books lying all over the house. In various crumb-filled nooks in the living room are the "for work" books, all the important female books, all the galleys, all the press



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releases. The most "fun" book gets to ride in style with me in my car's passenger seat, Mother's Little Helper, good for that amyl-popper boost when gaps of time open up between errands. Our master bathroom houses the slower-moving barges, the want-to-read if not need-to-know. On top is Camille Paglia's poetry anthology *Break, Blow, Burn*—not the most ideal title for a bathroom book, but how it refreshes! In the kids' bathroom, instead of bowls of lavender-scented potpourri, for guests we've thoughtfully placed David Kamp and Steven Daly's *Rock Snob's Dictionary: An Essential Lexicon of Rockological Knowledge* and Fergus Henderson's fascinatingly repellant cookbook, *The Whole Beast: Nose to Tail Eating*—everything you wanted to know about suet.

Anyway, the other night, my husband dropped his book on his night table with a bitter sigh, startling me. He was mired in the swamps of a boring biography ... of Captain Cook. "Captain Cook?" I exclaimed. "How can you botch a biography of Captain Cook?" Somehow, the author had. My husband couldn't quite put his finger on the problem. Was it the exhausting lists of provisions (heavy on salt pork)? The endless—somewhat inconclusive—trades with Fiji natives? At one point, fearing scurvy, Captain Cook orders his men to eat sauerkraut or face the lash. And that was it—what Mike had wanted was a grand seafaring adventure; what he'd gotten instead was a grim, colorless regimen of sauerkraut and flogging.

And just then, I knew what Mike needed for summer. No, not *Endurance* (fantastic but wintery) but—go back to basics—*Hawaii*, by James A. Michener. The gold standard of summer island epics. As I recall, it is fabulously lurid. The human sacrifices of naked sex-crazed Tahitians. Sexually repressed white missionaries who stink in unwashed wool. Japanese pineapple farmworkers drinking soy sauce to feign fever. Gambling Chinese lepers. Think of it, leprosy *and* gambling—excitable manipulation of mah-jongg-like pebbles, fingers falling off.

So for the husband, anyway, summer-reading problem solved.

**PAUL KENNEDY**

*Paul Kennedy's books include* The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers *and, most recently,* The Parliament of Man.

I will read Michael Shaara's *Killer Angels*, at last! Friends have told me


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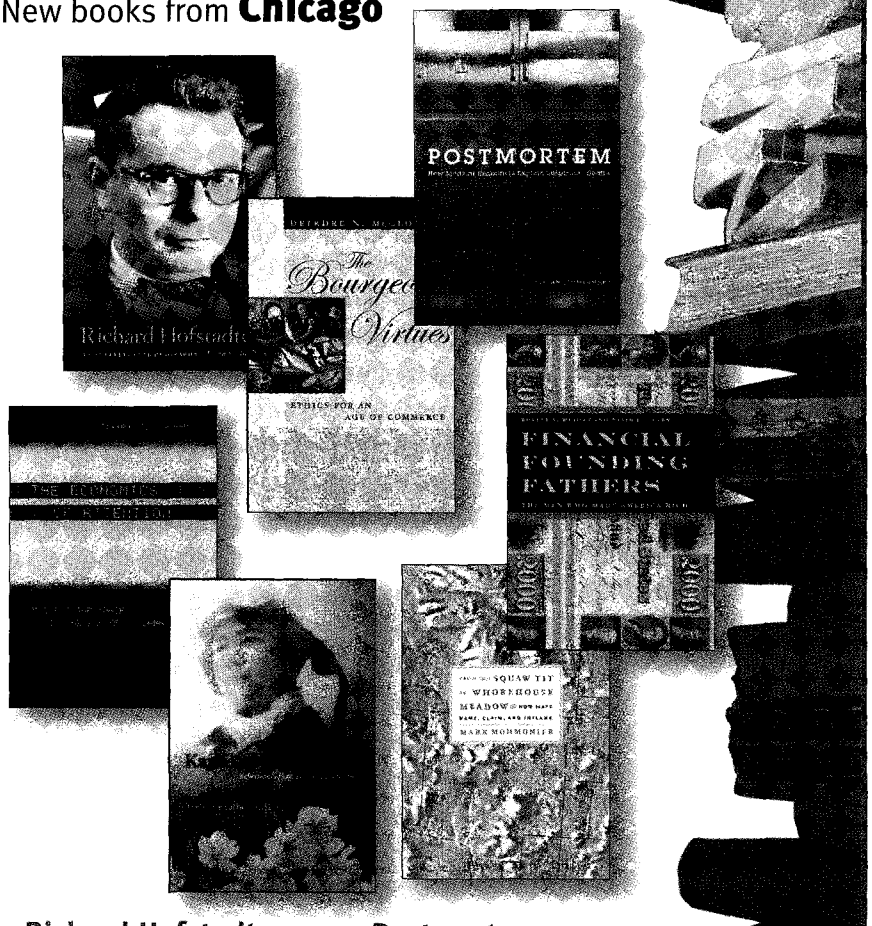


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for years that this is the best and most realistic novel of the Civil War. I have resisted steadfastly, out of admiration and loyalty for Thomas Keneally's remarkable *Confederates*. But this year Shaara will be read.

In complete contrast, I will also read A. E. Housman's famously elegiac, deeply moving collection of poems: *A Shropshire Lad*. Since I hope this summer to walk again through England's wolds and dales, it seems appropriate to be reading such pieces as "Bredon Hill" and "On Wenlock Edge."

And because I'm starting a book on Kipling this summer, I shall begin at the end, with his late, massive work, *The Irish Guards in the Great War*—a tribute to his son, John Kipling, who was killed in the Battle of Loos, in 1915.

War and peace, indeed.

### BETH HENLEY

*Beth Henley is a playwright and screenwriter. Her works include* The Wake of Jamey Foster, Control Freaks, The Miss Firecracker Contest, *and* Crimes of the Heart, *which won the Pulitzer Prize for drama. Her play* Ridiculous Fraud *premiered at Princeton's McCarter Theater in May.*

Although this sounds pretentious in the extreme, I'm actually going to read Saint Augustine's *Confessions* (the first of six books for a great class I'm taking). The professor says, "Modern Christianity may begin here, but so do Proust and Freud."

I'm also rereading *Housekeeping*, by Marilynne Robinson. I read it for the first time this spring, and it still haunts me. Finally, I'm reading *The Works of Melmont*, by Snoo Wilson. This is an obscure book—only 1,000 copies were printed. But I know the author as a playwright: his heart is a wilderness of madness, and his mind is a dazzling joy.

The book I recommend to summer readers is Ron Rash's *World Made Straight*. The language is beautiful, while the story is harsh, true, and relentless. A sublime read.

### DR. LAURA SCHLESSINGER

*Dr. Laura Schlessinger hosts* The Dr. Laura Schlessinger Program, *which is syndicated throughout the United States.*

I'll read, from 1967, *Expert Dinghy and Keelboat Racing*, by Paul Elvstrom. I'm the skipper of a thirty-foot racing boat in Santa Barbara, California—and this is *the* classic on "getting good."

Throughout my one-woman show, *In My Never to Be Humble Opinion*, I make many (usually humorous) references to biology and how it affects human behavior. Therefore, I am revving up to read *Genome*, by Matt Ridley.

I also intend to read every book by James Grippando (I already have two under my belt).

### CLAIRE MESSUD

*Claire Messud is the author of two novels,* The Last Life *and* When the World Was Steady, *and a volume of novellas,* The Hunters. *Her next novel,* The Emperor's Children, *will be published in August.*

*Theft: A Love Story*, by Peter Carey. Because I can't not read a book by Peter Carey; and because I'm particularly excited to return to his Australia, to the backwater of Bacchus Marsh and the rather posher backwater of Bellingen, and to the lively, venal art world of Sydney. Carey is best known for his (wonderful) historical novels, but he's in his glorious element when writing about the contemporary world, too. He's a consummate storyteller with a wicked eye and a tremendous ventriloquist's gift.

*The Wind on the Moon*, by Eric Linklater. This was one of my favorite books when I was a child—about the adventures of two little girls named Dinah and Dorinda, who can't help being naughty for a whole year because the wind is on the moon. Linklater's novel was begun as a tale told to his children, and it has that wonderful blend of fantasy and mundanity that children so adore. It's very funny, too. My daughter is thrilled at the prospect of naughty little girls; and I am dead keen to revisit a world in which people turn into animals, befriend falcons and pumas (who have an unfortunate habit of killing the neighbors' sheep), travel across continents in moving vans full of furniture, and dig their way out of impenetrable dungeons with the help of 100-year-old sappers.

*Goya*, by Robert Hughes. I began reading this marvelous and reflective biography just after my son was born, and had to put it aside because I couldn't do it justice. I've kept it on my night table all this time in the hope that I could return to it with proper attention; and now, at last, that time has come. The artist's transformation from painter of blithe society portraits to creator of agonized, fantastical, existentially profound canvases is one of art history's great stories; and the mordant, brilliant Robert Hughes is a writer to read whenever possible. It's a riveting pairing of author and subject.



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BOOKS

# The Persian Version

*Under the caked muck of theocracy in today's Iran, ancient and lovely literary springs still bubble*

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

In *The Captive Mind*, his brilliantly lucid reflection on totalitarianism and its temptations, Czeslaw Milosz devoted most of his essays to the problem of communism and the intellectuals. In one chapter, however, he turned aside to view another manifestation of tyranny, and also to examine the verbal and literary means by which it could be thwarted.

The essay is called "Ketman." The term was first introduced to the West by Arthur de Gobineau, a rather sinister ethnologist who in the mid-nineteenth century served two tours as a French diplomat in Tehran. It means the art and science of dissimulation, particularly in matters of religion. The ferocious orthodoxy of the Shia mullahs of Iran, Gobineau wrote, could be circumvented by, say, a heretical disciple of Avicenna, as long as the man was careful to make every outward show of conformity. With this done, he could begin to introduce all manner of subversive philosophy into his sermons and addresses:

> *Ketman* fills the man who practices it with pride. Thanks to it, a believer raises himself to a permanent state of superiority over the man he deceives, be he a minister of state or a powerful king: to him who uses *ketman*, the other is a miserable blind man whom one shuts off from the true path whose existence he does not suspect; while you, tattered and dying of hunger, trembling externally at the feet of duped force, your eyes are filled with light, you walk in brightness before your enemies. It is an unintelligent being that you make sport of; it is a dangerous beast that you disarm. What a wealth of pleasures!

Milosz immediately saw the application of this to the double life that was being lived by so many writers and intellectuals under Stalin's imperium. The Soviet regime to some extent "needed" culture, but also needed to contain it. Milosz was not to foresee that this state of affairs—deemed "Absurdistan" by one Czech author—would one day satirize itself out of existence.

Today's Iran is also an Absurdistan in one sense, though the term should not be misused so as to mask the tragic element of the comic: under the reign of the shah, the country emulated almost everything Western except democracy; under the rule of the imams, it rejects almost every aspect of modernity except nuclearism. That this fate should have befallen such a sophisticated and energetic people is a catastrophe piled upon a disaster. Yet the clerics now ruling the country have fallen into the very error that their communist enemies used to commit. They claim to legislate for every aspect of life, and they claim the right to scrutinize everything that is said and even thought. In this they attempt the impossible. If they emulated the Taliban and simply forbade all forms of music and film and all forms of writing except the Koranic, they would fail. Instead, they try to permit these things while also controlling them. That will eventually fail even more miserably. This is because before there was any Iran or any Islam, there was a Persian civilization and a Persian language, neither of which the Turbaned Ones dare disown. Iranians may have been conquered and Islamized by Arabs, but they are proud of retaining their ancient tongue and their literary and



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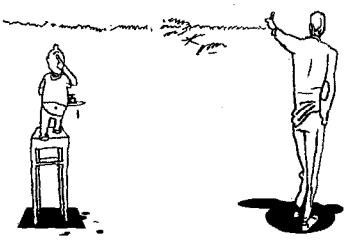
NEW FICTION

## A CLOSE READ

*What makes good writing good*

BY CHRISTINA SCHWARZ



*"She brought the coffee, in delicate white china cups, on a black lacquered tray, which she set on the table before the couch. They sipped the coffee and talked strainedly for a few moments. Then Stoner spoke of the part of the manuscript he had read, and the excitement he had felt earlier, in the library, came over him; he leaned forward, speaking intensely.*

*For many minutes the two of them were able to talk together unselfconsciously, hiding themselves under the cover of their discourse."*

—from **Stoner**, by John Williams (NYRB)

The first two sentences in this passage (from a 1965 novel long out of print, and just reissued) enhance the sense of unease between the characters—especially the first sentence, chopped as it is into four distinct phrases, each of about equal weight. The vivid detail of *the delicate white china and the black* lacquer draw attention to each separate description, emphasizing the stiltedness. The second sentence flows smoothly but contains the wonderfully effortful word *strainedly*. The structure of the last two sentences suggests the characters' connection and the beginnings of some complications they then experience. As Stoner's excitement builds, his actions are linked with a semicolon rather than cut apart with a period. Here are participles—*speaking* and *hiding*—rather than the simple past tense of these verbs, which, to remain consistent with the overall style, would have had to be set apart with an *and* ("he leaned forward and spoke intensely"). There is a suggestion here of forces beyond the characters' control: Stoner doesn't get excited; the excitement "came over him." And the two don't just talk; they are "able to talk"—a reminder that something had to be overcome first. Williams, whose writing style is strikingly plain, finally employs a rare and lovely metaphor—"hiding themselves under the cover of their discourse"—precisely when it's most necessary: to communicate a sensation that might shrivel in the light of straightforward expression.

*Christina Schwarz is the author of the novels* Drowning Ruth *and* All Is Vanity.

cultural memories. And Persia was known for love poetry, for the anti-clerical satires of Omar Khayyam, for polo and for chess and for the wine of Shiraz. These ancient and lovely springs continue to bubble under the caked grime and muck of theocracy. Every March great numbers of Iranians laughingly celebrate the *nowruz*, or New Year holiday—a fire ceremony with dances long pre-dating Islam. The mullahs do not like the festival but do not feel strong enough to prohibit anything so old and so popular.

Milosz subdivided *ketman* under communism into various types—"professional," "aesthetic," "skeptical," and "ethical." During a very enlightening visit to Iran last year, I found it was possible to distinguish some other individual forms of it. These range from the low to the sublime. An example of the low would be alcoholic *ketman*, whereby even those Iranians who do not touch the bottle make sure to have wine or liquor, often homebrewed, in their houses, for the benefit of guests—a small etiquette of defiance by the abstemious. More elevated is fashion *ketman*. The ayatollahs' law demands that all females in public must wear a *hijab* to cover the hair, and a long jacket to cover the area between the upper chest and the mid-thigh. (It's always useful to know what the pious are really thinking about.) In practice, there are not enough religious police to enforce this strictly. A woman without a *hijab* would certainly be beaten (and perhaps blinded or maimed with acid), but it is impressive to see the huge number who manage to conform to the letter of the law by sporting a colorful scarf, well back on the head and held in place by hair spray, as well as a coat so deftly cut as to make the very most of what it is intended to de-emphasize.

But Iranian culture and vivacity is kept going most of all by the country's writers and filmmakers (who are sometimes, like the director-poet Abbas Kiarostami, the same people). A continuous pressure leads to invention—to finding the cracks and gaps in the system, to testing its limits and transcending them. Once again, it must be remembered that when the Calibans of theocracy see their own faces in the glass, which they do not like to do, they are not always able to recognize their own features. (One thinks of the mirthless Bourbons when they first saw the faultless way that Goya had rendered them.) They dimly know that they are supposed to *have* a movie industry, publishing houses, newspapers, and such. An excerpt of a short story by Ghazi Rabihavi gives an account of what it's like to have to deal, after a thirteen-month wait, with the Ministry of Islamic Guidance:

> Unfortunately, your book has some small problems which cannot be corrected. I am certain you will agree with me. Take these first few sentences ... nowhere in our noble culture will you find any woman who would allow herself to stand waiting for her husband to bring her a cup of coffee. OK? Well, the next problem is the image of the wind sliding over the naked arms, which is provocative and has sexual overtones. Finally, nowhere in any noble culture will you find a sunrise that is like a sunset. Maybe it is a misprint. Here you are then. Here is your book. I hope you will write another book soon. We support you. Support you.

This extract is taken from the recent *Strange Times, My Dear*, an admirable PEN anthology of Iranian fiction and poetry released in paperback this spring. (The title echoes the refrain with which Ahmad Shamlu ends every stanza of "In This Blind Alley," his famous poem about the revolution.) Anyone wanting to sample the range and depth of the country's contemporary writing would do well to begin here. The authors not only deal with every "transgressive" subject, from booze to sex, but also illustrate something that is often overlooked in the monochrome presentation of their country in the West: the diversity of Armenians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Azeris that helps characterize Iranian society. (The



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collection is rather silent on the Kurds, a minority from whom we can expect to be hearing more, but it does contain a contribution from Roya Hakakian, whose molten yet tender memoir of growing up Jewish in the years of revolution, *Journey from the Land of No*, is itself one of the jewels of the exile literary renaissance.)

Some older readers of this essay will remember Reza Baraheni, whose 1977 book, *The Crowned Cannibals*, did much to alert the West to the sheer exorbitance and cruelty of the Pahlavi pseudo-dynasty. Baraheni is a Turkish speaker from Tabriz, and his poems, which lay a heavy emphasis on the material and the earthy, contain allusions to Ezra Pound, Walter Benjamin, and Charles Baudelaire. In one of the book's poems, "In The New Place, or Exile, A Simple Matter," he reminds us that Napoleon thought of mud as a fifth element. Baraheni's life experience is not unrepresentative: prison under the shah, participation in the revolution of 1979, swift disillusionment with the rise of Khomeini's despotism, horror at the terrifying war subsequently unleashed by Saddam Hussein, a further spell in prison under the clerics, and then exile. A great number of Iran's best minds and voices are compelled to live at least partly in diaspora in Europe and North America, and although this is greatly to our benefit and pleasure (vide the work of Azar Nafisi on her Tehran Nabokoviennes), we cannot forget what a price it exacts from Iran itself. Meanwhile, for those who bear the heat and burden of the day in the country itself, we can guess the weight of the atmosphere from another line of Ahmad Shamlu's poem: "They smell your breath lest you have said: I love you."

Mention of Napoleon brings me to the work of Iraj Pezeshkzad. How is one to convey the extraordinary charm and power of this author? A little preface is needed. Iranian intellectuals are nostalgic (I do not think this use of the term is improper) for two moments in their nation's agonized history. The first is the 1906 constitutional revolution, when the liberal and cosmopolitan elements of the society, though eventually suppressed by Russian imperial gunnery, managed to establish a precedent for a modern

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and outward-looking system. The second is the atrocity of August 19, 1953, when the elected nationalist government of Mohammed Mossadegh was forcibly removed by an Anglo-American intrigue that instated the shah as a dictator and returned the country's main natural resource to foreign control. These two external interventions gravely stultified Iran's development and had a retarding effect on the national psyche. It became almost customary and automatic, in a land that is so naturally internationalist, to attribute literally everything to the machinations of designing outsiders. (The Khomeinist regime, needless to add, exploits this plebeian tendency to this day. It also avails itself of the antique Shia concept of *taqqiya*, or the religious permission to dissemble in dealings with infidels. One might call this the top-down version of *ketman*.) As an Englishman I found it almost flattering to encounter the number of people in Tehran who—culturally rather despising Americans—believed that the British government determined absolutely all matters. Why, had they not even installed the mullahs in 1979 as a revenge for the way that the United States had taken the lion's share of oil after 1953? The British ambassador, whose official dominion includes two especially nice walled garden estates in upper and lower Tehran, confessed to me that he sometimes found this paranoia useful, since it meant that nobody would decline to meet him.

In 1973, Pezeshkzad published *My Uncle Napoleon*, a cheerful satire of this very mentality, and it became the best-loved work of fiction in Iran before it was banned by the clerics during the revolution. Likewise set in an enclosed garden house that contains several branches of an extended family, it could be summarized as a love story enfolded in a bildungsroman and wrapped in a conspiracy theory. Except that it cannot be summarized. Not even Azar Nafisi, who contributes a sparkling introduction to the new American edition, can accomplish that. Uncle Napoleon, the micro-megalomaniac who dominates the little world of the family, is convinced that the British imperialists really care about him and mean to get him by fair means or foul. A beautiful counterpoint to his fantastic solipsism is the appalling verbosity of his manservant, Mash Qasem. Some have claimed to see a Bertie-and-Jeeves duo in the setup; I think this is misleading, except with respect to the amazingly complex and farcical love affairs that form the subtext. Rabelais and Cervantes are in there somewhere as well. To return to my Caliban metaphor, we might remember that it was Swift who defined satire as a looking glass in which people discerned every face but their own. In the vanity and stupidity of Uncle Napoleon, the religious thugs of Qum must have glimpsed at least something, but the joke is on them, because in today's widespread Iranian *samizdat* the book—and a now-banned television series that was once made of it—is a blockbuster.

**Before there was any Iran or any Islam, there was a Persian civilization and a Persian language—neither of which the Turbaned Ones dare disown.**

Pezeshkzad also makes a contribution to *Strange Times, My Dear*, in the form of a gem-like story titled "Delayed Consequences of the Revolution." Now an exile himself, he makes gentle but deadly fun of those émigrés who forgather, like the White Russians of old, in a café society devoted to toasting the ancien régime. In this context—sometimes to be found in today's Los Angeles—old men forget, as well as remember, or remember "with advantages," what deeds they did. In what I like to think of as a homage to *ketman*, Pezeshkzad illuminates the private codes and allusions in which the participants convey discrepant meanings to one another, and also perpetuate the mythology of foreign conspiracy. ("If you want to explain something to your compatriot in your own language, you can use five or six words and get the meaning across, but to explain the same thing to a foreigner in another language, you'll need to employ at least fifty or sixty words." This is offered as an account of the difficulty of elucidating simple property deals in the days of "His Highness the Shah.")

Half of Iran's citizens are regarded by the state as chattel, so it is not startling to find so many women writers in the most exposed positions of dissent. Azadeh Moaveni's memoir, *Lipstick Jihad*, (a perfect title for the practice of fashion *ketman* and the struggle for femininity, as well as feminism) was a salient effort in this regard, and it is good to see her helping to co-author *Iran Awakening*, the autobiography of Shirin Ebadi, the country's most recent Nobel laureate. Ebadi was the first woman to be appointed a judge in Iran, in the waning days of the shah, and she lost that job almost as soon as the revolution (which she supported) had taken place. She opens her book with a commonplace and uninteresting testimony to her enduring religious faith, the sincerity of which is impossible to gauge. If this is *ketman*—the apparent sharing of a belief with those who despise and oppress her—it is the price of her ticket. Without such protestations of faith she would almost certainly be dead. As it is, she was on a death-squad list drawn up by allegedly "rogue" elements in the Ministry of Intelligence, which debated only on the propriety of assassinating her before the end of the month of Ramadan. Her extraordinary fortitude in pressing on with her legal inquiry into the murders that had already taken place is not only a testimony in itself but also a window into the almost unrivaled sordidness and cynicism of the Islamic Republic. Here is a state that holds that a father *cannot* be convicted for murdering his own daughter; a state in which teenage girls are hanged in public for immorality, and virgins raped before execution because the Koran forbids the execution of virgins.

In *Persepolis*, Marjane Satrapi views matters from still another perspective: the special *ketman* of ironic cartooning. In smart and confident strokes she draws a history of the Khomeini revolution as seen by a girl who was nine when the old fanatic returned from exile. The whole chaotic world of parents and other adults,



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faced with crises that are wholly new and frightening to them, is affectionately and ironically caught by a girl who has a real talent for overhearing. Marxist relatives keep up false hopes that the people have *not* been fooled; Saddam Hussein's planes disgorge bombs over the city; veils are imposed on small children; the Jewish neighbors get into a spot of bother; and, yes, a young friend is legally raped by a Revolutionary Guard before being shot. Most stark are the growing girl's encounters with the *komiteh*, the brutish and depraved louts who are employed as the enforcers of morality and who take a special pleasure in the taunting and bullying of women. But there is low farce as well: the bastards who come looking for the homemade wine are actually seeking only a bribe, which becomes clear only after the precious fluid has been hastily poured away for nothing. The solidarity of the little family and its friends turns out to be less fragile than it looks. Yes, the bearded sadists do stop women in the street and harshly smell their breath for telltale traces of love, but, as in the resolution of Uncle Napoleon's madly hermetic domestic despotism, *amor vincit omnia.*

May it be so. The PEN anthology, as well as the work of Shirin Ebadi, was for a time treated as mere matter that could not be viewed by Americans. Reflecting a level of stupidity that would not disgrace the dumbest authoritarian state, the U.S. Treasury Department believed that unless Ebadi applied for a special license, the book's publication in this country would amount to trading with the enemy. A possible penalty of up to a million dollars or ten years imprisonment was mentioned. Prompt litigation held off the official notion that the words of Iranian writers can be forfeit as a "foreign asset." American readers have a special duty, in view of the distraught history between our two countries, to take an interest in this "asset." Whatever the outcome of the current confrontation, we have the right and the duty of engagement with a people and a culture very much imbricated with our own. How agreeable to be able to report that this is also a tremendous pleasure.

*Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of* The Atlantic *and a columnist for* Vanity Fair.


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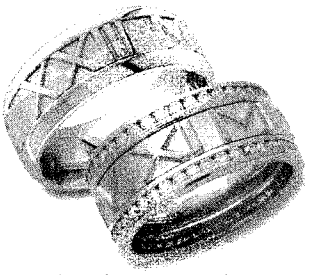

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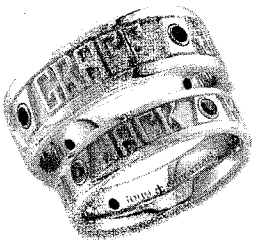

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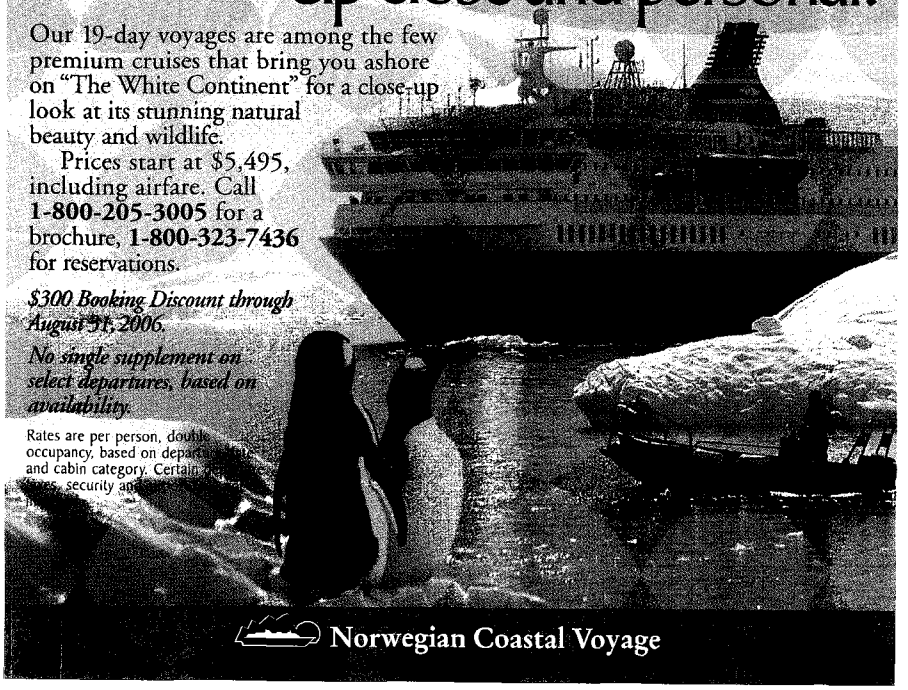

Norwegian Coastal Voyage




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# Cover to Cover

*A guide to additional releases*

BY BENJAMIN HEALY AND BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

## CURRENT AFFAIRS

**Planet of Slums**
*by Mike Davis (Verso)*
The author of *City of Quartz* examines the increasingly visible consequences of a world in which more than a billion people exist almost invisibly in urban poverty.

**Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq**
*by Ahmed S. Hashim (Cornell)*
A professor at the Naval War College anatomizes the Iraqi insurgency and assesses the long road still ahead.

**The Parliament of Man**
*by Paul Kennedy (Random House)*
The prominent Yale historian assesses the past lives and future prospects of the United Nations.

**The Peace of Illusions**
*by Christopher Layne (Cornell)*
Expansionist post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy represents not a break with the past but, rather, continuity with it—which is precisely the problem, the author argues.

**The Looming Tower**
*by Lawrence Wright (Knopf)*
A history of al-Qaeda in the years leading up to 9/11—and the intelligence community's dawning (but incomplete) awareness of the threat.

## U.S. HISTORY

**American Taxation, American Slavery**
*by Robin L. Einhorn (Chicago)*
The long tradition of American anti-government rhetoric finds its roots not in virtuous yeomanry, the author argues, but rather in the short-term efforts of slave owners looking to protect their interests.

**James Madison and the Struggle for the Bill of Rights**
*by Richard Labunski (Oxford)*
Watch the wig powder fly as James Madison and Patrick Henry slug it out over the constitutional freedoms we take for granted today.

**Growing Up Jim Crow**
*by Jennifer Ritterhouse (North Carolina)*
A study of how both black and white children in the pre-civil-rights South learned the "etiquette" of segregation.

**Financial Founding Fathers**
*by Robert E. Wright and David J. Cowen (Chicago)*
Portraits of Alexander Hamilton, Andrew Jackson, and the seven other men most responsible for building the monolith of American finance.

**Mayflower**
*by Nathaniel Philbrick (Viking)*
The Pilgrims' turbulent first fifty years in the New World, and how they set the stage for subsequent American history, from the author of *In the Heart of the Sea*.

## WORLD HISTORY

**For Prophet and Tsar**
*by Robert D. Crews (Harvard)*
A historical look at Russia's engagement with Islam from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth.

**Mao's Last Revolution**
*by Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals (Harvard)*
An exhaustive history of China's Cultural Revolution.

**In Tasmania**
*by Nicholas Shakespeare (Overlook)*
A novelist's history of the former penal colony made good.

**Australia**
*by Frank Welsh (Overlook)*
A single-volume history in which the author, an Englishman, concludes, "Australia is probably the most successful society in the world and the most agreeable to live in."

**The Wehrmacht**
*by Wolfram Wette (Harvard)*
A German historian dismantles the myth that the Wehrmacht fought World War II with relatively clean hands.

## BIOGRAPHY

**The Most Famous Man in America**
*by Debby Applegate (Doubleday)*
Henry Ward Beecher was a charismatic preacher and abolitionist superstar, until a late-nineteenth-century sex scandal brought him down.

**Mockingbird**
*by Charles J. Shields (Holt)*
A life of Harper Lee, who wrote one novel and then dropped from sight, refusing all interview requests (including the author's) for the past forty years.

**LBJ**
*by Randall B. Woods (Free Press)*
Lyndon B. Johnson was undoubtedly flawed—just not as much as some other biographers would have it.

## SOCIETY *and* CULTURE

**Ogallala Blue**
*by William Ashworth (Norton)*
The story of a massive aquifer beneath the Great Plains, and the dire environmental and economic consequences that would come with its depletion.

**Remember Me**
*by Lisa Takeuchi Cullen (HarperCollins)*
An updated look at the American way of death, surveying such contemporary curiosities as Harley-Davidson-themed funerals and diamonds made from loved ones' ashes.

**The Price of Privilege**
*by Madeline Levine (HarperCollins)*
A clinical psychologist assesses the ennui epidemic among today's teens, and points the finger at meddling parents and the dulling effects of affluence.

**Food Is Love**
*by Katherine J. Parkin (Pennsylvania)*
A history of American food advertisers' appeals to female consumers: generous portions of idealized comfort and gnawing guilt.

**Staying Up Much Too Late**
*by Gordon Theisen (St. Martin's)*
An interdisciplinary meditation on Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*, which here emerges as a compelling monument to thwartedness that challenges the standard narrative of can-do American optimism.



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## SPORTS

**They Played the Game**
*edited by Stephen Randall (M Press)*
A collection of *Playboy* interviews conducted with sports stars, including Hank Aaron, O. J. Simpson, and Brett Favre.

**Forty Million Dollar Slaves**
*by William C. Rhoden (Crown)*
A *New York Times* sports columnist examines the plight of the modern black athlete.

## RELIGION

**Body Piercing Saved My Life**
*by Andrew Beaujon (Da Capo)*
A music journalist explores the thriving (and increasingly hip) Christian-rock scene.

**Rumspringa**
*by Tom Shachtman (North Point)*
Tradition dictates that Amish teens take time away from their community to sow their wild oats. Sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll ensue—followed, in 80 percent of the cases, by a return to the fold.

## ESSAYS

**Friendship**
*by Joseph Epstein (Houghton Mifflin)*
A leading essayist's musings on the changing nature of companionship and fraternity.

**I Feel Bad About My Neck**
*by Nora Ephron (Knopf)*
Thoughts on aging and femininity from a veteran cultural observer.

**Uncommon Carriers**
*by John McPhee (FSG)*
A freight-transport travelogue conducted via towboat, UPS, and tanker truck.

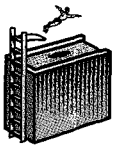
## MEMOIR

**Heat**
*by Bill Buford (Knopf)*
A *New Yorker* writer agrees to become Mario Batali's "kitchen slave," learning valuable lessons about excess and suffering in the process.

**Into My Own**
*by Roger Kahn (St. Martin's)*
The eminent sportswriter pays tribute to the people who most shaped his life, including his parents, Robert Frost, and Pee Wee Reese.

**The Sound of No Hands Clapping**
*by Toby Young (Da Capo)*
The bumbling Hollywood adventures of the author of *How to Lose Friends and Alienate People.*

## NOVELS *and* SHORT STORIES



**Cellophane**
*by Marie Arana (Dial Press)*
The title substance upends a Peruvian family's paper business and unlocks the secrets of its past, in this debut novel from the editor of *The Washington Post Book World.*

**The Driftless Area**
*by Tom Drury (Atlantic Monthly)*
A young ne'er-do-well gets caught up in a heist in a sleepy Midwestern town.

**Nancy Culpepper**
*by Bobbie Ann Mason (Random House)*
A Kentucky-born historian educated in New England grapples with the two worlds that define her in this collection of linked short stories.

**Gallatin Canyon**
*by Thomas McGuane (Knopf)*
A new collection of stories from the author of *The Bushwhacked Piano.*

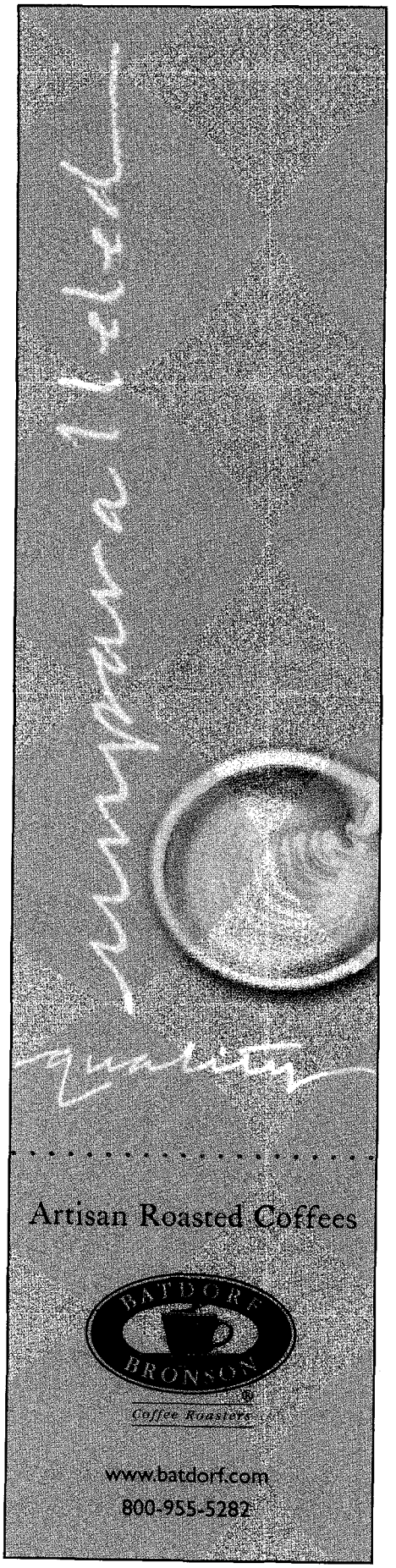
## MYSTERY *and* SUSPENSE

**Pegasus Descending**
*by James Lee Burke (Simon & Schuster)*
Detective Dave Robicheaux navigates New Orleans (and his newfound sobriety) while on the trail of a mysterious counterfeiter.

**The Night Gardener**
*by George Pelecanos (Little, Brown)*
The discovery of a body in a community garden reopens a twenty-year-old murder investigation in this noir set in the nation's capital.

**The Ruins**
*by Scott Smith (Knopf)*
Two vacationing American couples find terror in an old Mayan settlement, in the second novel from the author of *A Simple Plan.*

**The Devil's Feather**
*by Minette Walters (Knopf)*
A foreign correspondent tracks a serial killer from Sierra Leone to Iraq to the U.K.





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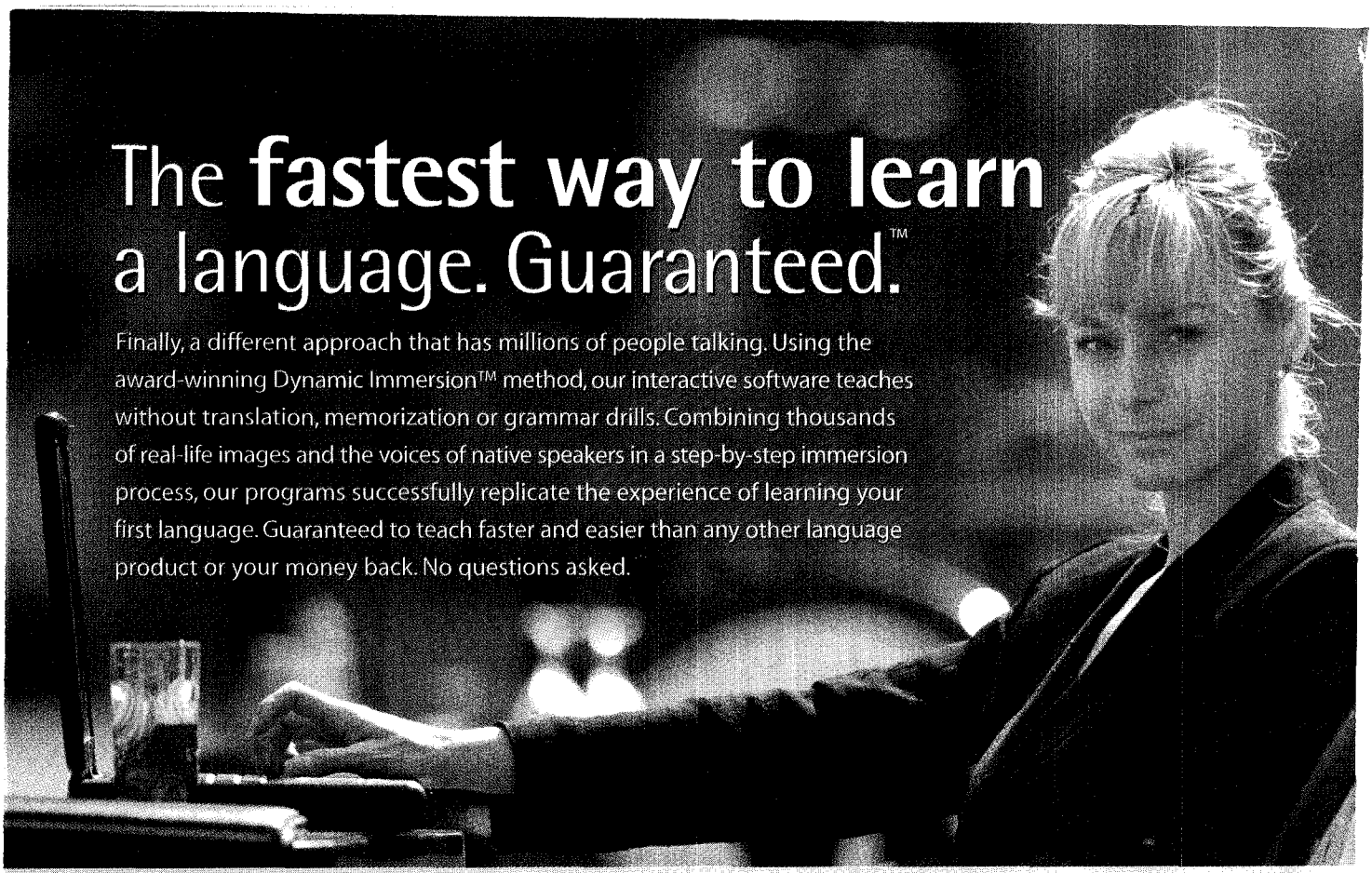

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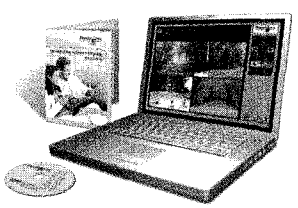

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TRAVELS

# Greetings from Airworld!

*Six days in five airports—a survivor's guide*

BY WAYNE CURTIS

I was holding my digital camera, elbows high and splayed outward to frame the shot, when a security guard suddenly appeared on the tiny screen in front of me, wagging a finger. "No photos," he announced. I lowered the camera.

"But it's an empty building," I said. His look suggested it would be unwise to pursue this line of reasoning. He wagged his finger again. "No photos," he repeated.

It was nearly 6 a.m. I was at John F. Kennedy International Airport, standing in front of the vacant 1962 TWA terminal, which was designed by Eero Saarinen and inspired in part by the Sydney Opera House. It's a splendid if peculiar bit of aviation architecture—one critic compared it to a "Danish Modern salad bowl"—and one of the great landmarks in the domain of the frequent flyer, or what the novelist Walter Kirn has called "Airworld": "a nation within a nation, with its own language, architecture, [and] mood."

Prohibiting me from taking shots of one of the most photographed air terminals seemed faintly idiotic, but I didn't say any more, just stowed my camera in my bag. I certainly wanted to do my part to ensure that obsolete Finnish-American architecture would not be blown up by terrorists. But before leaving, I took a few minutes to admire how the white concrete took on the champagne glow of the dawning light.

In my work as a travel writer, I pass through a lot of airports. Like many travelers, I never really see them—they're a blur of large glass windows, speckled terrazzo floors, and white-shirted TSA



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agents giving the come-ahead hand flick at metal detectors.

But I wondered: What if I took the time to explore airports as if they were cities unto themselves, with teeming neighborhoods and intriguing architecture and entertainment districts? Such a journey seemed fun in the way that exploring a Habitrail would be fun. Also, I could learn whether all those articles about airports becoming stately pleasure domes were true. (*USA Today*: "Airports try to make flying a beautiful experience." *New York Times*: "Work Out, See a Rembrandt or Play the Slots, All Between Flights.")

So I recently set off on a six-day tour of Airworld, visiting five busy U.S. airports and adhering to one simple rule: I could do whatever I wanted, except leave. I would be a boulevardier through this terminal, a flâneur down that concourse, approaching each airport as if it were its own little canton within Airworld. And no hanging out at the VIP lounges for me—I'm a traveler, not a tourist. I prefer to be among the people.

The British writer John B. Priestley once observed, "A good holiday is one spent among people whose notions of time are vaguer than yours." I suspected the opposite might also be true—that an enjoyable holiday might be had by idling among overwrought travelers who were fretting about making it to the boarding gate on time. I spent 106 hours on what most people would call "layover." I preferred to think of it as "vacation."

JFK is the nation's eighth-busiest airport and one of the leading international gateways. It opened to commercial flights in 1948 (it was then called Idlewild), but didn't take on its current character until the late 1950s, when airlines were invited to design their own terminals around a plaza with a grand Fountain of Liberty—a terrestrial counterpart to the Statue of Liberty.

The fountain has long since been buried under a slabby parking garage, but many of the terminals remain. As a result, the airport is a World's Fair of dubious architecture. An elevated AirTrain loops past the nine terminals every few minutes, and you can ride from one to the next for free. (It's $5 if you want to leave the airport.)

I toured the Pavilion of Unappreciated Brazilian Art in Terminal 8 (the American Airlines terminal, built in 1960), where two heroic murals by the painter Carybé can be found in a dim area near a food court. (The terminal is slated for demolition.) Yesterday's Terminal of Tomorrow (Terminal 3, originally the Pan Am Worldport, also from 1960) is a good example of what happens when the optimistic, outward-looking World's Fair attitude collides with the post-9/11, hunkering-down worldview. It still has its great, gravity-defying umbrella of concrete, but has been recast as a House of Security Horrors, with clunky partitions, nonexistent directional signs, and, during my visit, the edifying sight of a family late for a flight running up an automobile ramp while dodging oncoming cars.

**I wondered: What if I took the time to explore airports as if they were cities unto themselves? Such a trip seemed fun in the way that exploring a Habitrail would be fun.**

I spent most of my time lounging in Terminal 4, the sleek new Terminal of Today, which replaced the outdated international-arrivals building in May 2001. It has an airy, inviting feel and a forty-foot-high Alexander Calder mobile called *Flight* that's fun to watch even if it doesn't move much. It also has a shopping arcade said to be the length of four Manhattan blocks. I browsed at the Metropolitan Museum Shop, Swarovski crystal, and Hermès, but found little I needed. I then stopped off at XpresSpa, where tinkly wind-chime music played in the background. Mini-spas have been cropping up at airports—there's also an Oasis Day Spa past security at the JetBlue terminal—perhaps as a more wholesome alternative to getting hammered at a bar between flights.

Services offered at XpresSpa included an exfoliating papaya mask, a seaweed facial, an "exotic hand ritual," and a range of massage treatments. For $20 I could spend fifteen minutes in a mechanized massage lounger. Or, for the same money, I could walk down the concourse and have a couple of drinks. Which I did at Bar Avion, where the bartender knew that a Manhattan is always made with bitters.

Then it was time for bed. Sadly, America hasn't yet embraced the capsule hotels that are popular in Japan and are making inroads at some British airports. American airport travelers are a rugged breed who like to sleep out under the fluorescent tubes. So I pulled out my laptop, poached a wireless connection from the Varig lounge, and visited sleepinginairports.com. This is a user-compiled directory of where to find quiet corners, and benches without armrests, at airports worldwide. A user at JFK had recommended "under the stairs leading to the Aer Lingus frequent fliers lounge area"; another suggested locking oneself in one of the spacious handicapped bathrooms. Both options seemed wanting.

Yet another writer suggested the "upstairs large red carpet area," although there was also a snake in this Eden: a security guard named Agapita, who had achieved a small measure of online celebrity for her valor in the War on Recumbency. One couple had posted an account of her rousting them out of the red-carpet area, after which they sought refuge on a cold floor elsewhere. They were later awoken again by "the horrid clapping of Agapita," who barked, "You can't sleep here! Move now, before I throw you out!"

The red-carpet area was the size of a basketball court. I settled in along one wall with my head on my bags, counting fourteen other sleepers, their snoring softly syncopated. I slept fitfully, although *fitfully* is perhaps not the right word. Actually, neither is *slept*. Every twenty minutes or so I would abruptly emerge from a state of confused mental



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dormancy, imagining I had heard clapping sounds.

Around 4 a.m. I imagined I heard birds chirping. Then I opened my eyes and saw several sparrows pecking their way across the carpet toward me in pursuit of doughnut crumbs. I found this at once enchanting and disturbing, and I couldn't get back to sleep. So I got up and set off to look for a shower.

I eventually found a shower, but it was some hours and several thousand miles later, at McCarran Airport, in Las Vegas. McCarran is the fifth-busiest airport in the country, with over 44 million travelers passing through annually. From the terminal you can see the great pyramid of Luxor and the little skyline of New York–New York, but Las Vegas has done an admirable job of bringing the Strip to the airport. McCarran has some 1,300 slot machines, which ding and chime incessantly like cell phones with subwoofers. These were very forgiving for the first half hour, but became more cranky and thirsty for cash in the second.

Above the baggage claim is the Esplanade, a shopping arcade with gift-shop outposts of many of the big casinos. Nearby is the Howard W. Cannon Aviation Museum, open twenty-four hours a day, where I learned that in 1960 the airport, like the rest of Las Vegas, was a splashy bit of midcentury architecture surrounded by dun-colored desert, and that Howard Hughes was not as nutty as you might think.

I found my shower at the 24-Hour Fitness center, one floor beneath the baggage carousels. I had thought workout facilities would be common at airports, but they aren't, and a fully equipped one is a rarity. I learned this after logging some time at airportgyms.com, which lists many gyms a cab ride away, but few on site.

I paid $10 for a day pass, put on sneakers and shorts, and spent two hours doing the hamster thing on a treadmill and making my way through the workout stations. The club was as well equipped as a large suburban strip-mall fitness center. Afterward, I found the steam room broken and the sauna too much of a commitment, but the

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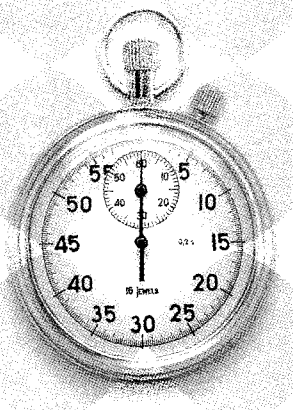

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shave and long shower were just short of spectacular.

Here's another great thing about McCarran: if you want a little fresh air, you don't need to go outside. The $O_2$ Bar & Spa in Concourse C first caught my attention because it had the same eggcup-style stools I had admired in the SkyMall catalog. I signed up for ten minutes, telling the oxygen keeper that I was feeling a bit fatigued; she prescribed a mix of aromas—bayberry, mandarin orange, peppermint, and eucalyptus—that evidently are to oxygen what soda is to scotch. She handed me a two-pronged nosepiece, and oxygen soon started bubbling through four small silos filled with colored liquids. I could control how much of each scent I got, but no matter how I set the dials, it always smelled like a Grateful Dead concert.

**American travelers are a rugged breed who like to sleep under the lights. So I opened my laptop, poached a wireless connection, and visited sleepinginairports.com.**

I slept well that night at Gate A-8, thanks to my workout, a malfunctioning overhead light, and an Ambien, though I was awakened at 5 a.m. by the roar of a terrazzo Zamboni. I set off for the Starbucks over at the more upscale Terminal D, and watched a magnificent desert sunrise through soaring windows.

Airports were once designed to attract local visitors, since those promoting air travel wanted to make people comfortable around planes and ease their fear of flying. One of Washington, D.C.'s airports had a public swimming pool; New York's LaGuardia had a skywalk, where for 10 cents you could spend the day watching planes from an elevated deck.

Stylish restaurants were also part of the airport outreach program. New York's Idlewild had both the Princess Room and the Golden Door, the latter of which had three dance floors, employed Winston Churchill's former sommelier, and attracted favorable notice from *The New York Times*'s Craig Claiborne. Atlanta's airport featured a plantation-style restaurant where an elderly black man was hired to tell kids Uncle Remus stories.

Encounter restaurant at Los Angeles International is a throwback to the olden days. It's housed in what is probably Los Angeles's most iconic structure: the 1961 Theme Building, which looks like a Danish Modern fondue pot, to go with JFK's salad bowl. With the aid of Walt Disney Imagineering, this outlandish structure got a multimillion-dollar makeover about a decade ago. The theme was apparently "Gidget Goes to the Andromeda Galaxy." The elevator music is toe-tapping tiki-pop, and the doors to the restaurant open into the Jetsons' living room. When the bartender pulls the beer tap, sounds of intergalactic warfare echo around the room.

Little, of course, needs to be said about airport food. It's generally accepted that a good meal at an airport is any meal eaten on a tabletop that's not tacky with unidentified substances and plastered with the confetti of torn salt packets. One would think that airports would attract celebrity chefs searching for new pasturage, but other than Wolfgang Puck—the California culinary colossus who now vends salads and sandwiches from takeout alcoves the size of ATM vestibules—the pickings are slim.

Encounter was thus a treat, with its unplastic flatware, solid plates, and drinking water freely supplied. I found a seat at the long, curvy bar and selected from among nine martinis while admiring the comings and goings of the aircraft. I enjoyed every bite of my market salad and Peking roast duck. The U.S. dollar is astonishingly weak in Airworld, but Encounter offers good value: main courses range from $19 to $36.

The biggest surprise at LAX was discovering that it's friendly to pedestrians. It may be the only major airport where you can take a short walk and find yourself on actual sidewalks, amid civilians. In a city that equates pedestrianism with deviancy, I was also astonished to find a nicely designed pedestrian entryway off Sepulveda Boulevard—a plaza with a 9/11 memorial along with two 100-foot-high translucent glass towers. These are part of an installation of twenty-six towers by the artist Paul Tzanetopoulos, which by day give the airport approach the look of an oil refinery designed by *Dwell* magazine, and by night become a glowing forest of colorful pillars.

Across the street from the plaza is a Radisson Hotel. I headed over and discovered that it has a heated Olympic-sized outdoor pool and a small fitness room; you can also get massage and reflexology treatments. (Hotel facilities are available to those who get a room for the day, which generally costs half the overnight room rate; walk, or hop the free shuttle from the airport.) Plus, there's the rooftop lounge, which is a fine place to marvel anew that 747s can actually get airborne.

Two cocktails and the swipe of a credit card later, I was toying with a remote control that adjusted the firmness of my guest-room mattress, pleased that none of the settings was "articulated vinyl-upholstered bench with armrests." In the three seconds before sleep, I weighed whether I had violated my rule about not leaving the airport. The answer: yes. But, as noted, I'm a traveler, not a tourist. Travelers break the rules.

In his splendid cultural history *Naked Airport* (2004), Alastair Gordon explains that airport planners once aimed to allow travelers to park their cars as close to their departure gates as possible. That was fine until 1973, when federal legislation mandated stricter security screening. (From 1968 to 1972 there were 154 attempted hijackings to Cuba.) So the Great Wall of Airworld was constructed, dividing the land into the provinces of pre-security and post-security.

At airports like LAX and JFK, which had scattered their terminals around parking lots, airport geography became annoyingly balkanized. At Kennedy, for instance, where I was flying JetBlue, I couldn't get to the Peet's or Starbucks coffee stands at non-JetBlue terminals, nor could I learn what treasures might



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be found at the art museum at Gate 46 of American Airlines' new Terminal 9.

Life post-security was much better at Detroit Metro's McNamara terminal, one of the best examples of the new mega-terminal, in which retail and dining are clustered beyond the passenger-screening facility. The terminal, which opened in 2002 and serves as one of Northwest's hubs, is a marvel. Its Concourse A is a mile long and has a soaring, hangar-like ceiling, yet never feels oppressively huge. A cherry-red tram whisks along on a track overhead to get travelers from one end to another. It's futuristic, but with the retro air of a pre-war European train station.

Little grace notes abound. A computerized fountain sends out arcs of water that are designed to wryly torment passersby, not unlike a street mime. Instead of many small, annoying TV screens, there are a few stadium-sized Jumbo-Trons showing the news, using closed captioning and barely audible sound. Concourse B—not really worth a special trip, since it's more or less a miniature version of Concourse A—is connected to the mother concourse via a tunnel that was evidently designed by someone who fully appreciated the 1960s: it hosts a psychedelic light show so mesmerizing that I rode the moving walkway several times. You can get a chair massage or dope up on oxygen at Ora-Oxygen's spa. And the dining options here are above average, with Sora sushi, Edy's Ice Cream, and the Mediterranean Grill, which has commendable kebabs, tabouli, and hummus, and a waitress who calls everyone "hon."

The best option for dining or relaxing, though, is to leave the security zone for the Westin Hotel. Detroit Metro has borrowed an old idea: an airport hotel integrated right into the terminal. The idea has been around since at least 1954, when Hyatt constructed a motel with palms and a swimming pool at Los Angeles International. At Detroit, Westin has brought the idea fully up to date, with a grand atrium lobby, a bamboo forest, and a reflecting pool that surrounds an appealing restaurant. Upstairs are a small swimming pool, a Jacuzzi, and an exercise room (a day pass is $15). The guest rooms are nicely appointed

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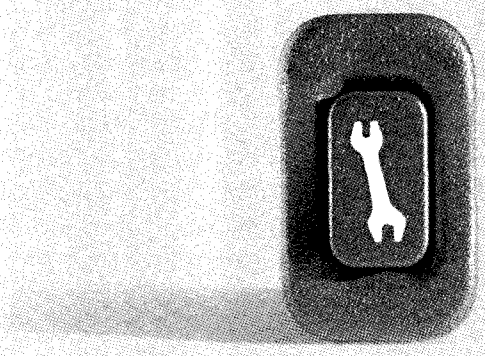

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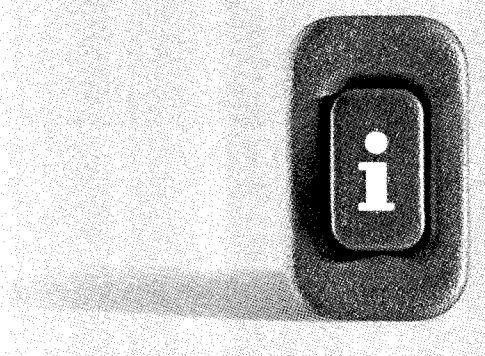

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in tans and browns, as if created by a saddle maker, and I was pleased to find that from my bed I could watch travelers wheeling their luggage to the check-in counters below.

When you're ready to leave, those with carry-on luggage can check in at a Northwest kiosk next to the hotel reception desk, then re-enter the airport through the hotel's own TSA-manned terminal entrance. My stay at the airport and hotel was so pleasing that if time-shares were ever offered, I would attend the presentation even without the lure of a free toaster oven.

**My stay at the Detroit airport and its on-site hotel was so pleasant that if time-shares were offered, I would attend the presentation even without the lure of a free toaster oven.**

Americans often talk of an antediluvian golden age of travel, an era when stewardesses were unfailingly smiling and accommodating, airline meals were served with genuine flatware, and airports had barbers and furriers.

Of course, it was never that golden. In 1946, *Fortune* magazine reported from the front lines of air travel:

> The drooping grandmothers, the crying babies, the continuous, raucous, unintelligible squawk of the loudspeaker, the constant push and jostle of new arrivals ... make bus terminals look like luxury ... Almost all U.S. airports are utterly barren of things to do. The dirty little lunch counters are always choked with permanent sitters staring at their indigestible food ... The traveler consigned to hours of tedious waiting can only clear a spot on the floor and sit on his baggage and, while oversmoking, drearily contemplate his sins.

Apart from the smoking, this pretty much describes the experience today at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Hartsfield-Jackson is the world's busiest airport, with about 86 million travelers passing through annually. It has a main security checkpoint, after which you may roam freely through all the terminals. That's the good news. The bad news is that there's not much reason to. The architecture here is not soaring and lyrical, as in Detroit. The airport was built on the cheap, and feels like a convenience store that had a bad experience with steroids. It has low ceilings, interminably long concourses, and security cameras hanging from Q-tip-like pods. Much of it tends toward the worn and tired, and the furniture at the gates may bring back not wholly pleasant memories of college dorm life.

The six terminals are connected by a three-and-a-half-mile underground train track. One of the things I usually like about airport trains is that they're scaled down and let you feel for a moment that you're only playing at being an adult. But the trains at Hartsfield-Jackson are all grown-up and dad-like.

Atlanta is the ancestral home of CNN, which plays incessantly on the many suspended television screens. In the feng shui of airports, there is good information energy (free WiFi) and bad information energy (endless news loops about unfolding mine disasters). One of the things I brought on my vacation was a small device called TV-B-Gone, a remote control preprogrammed with the "off" codes for virtually every television. Try as I might, though, the televisions here proved resistant. I found this especially irksome while overnighting at Gate E-12, which is otherwise notable for its armrest-less benches.

Relief is available, but at a price. Laptop Lane, a chain now in nine major airports, rents out Lilliputian offices with desks, a phone (free long-distance calls included), and a computer with Internet access. I stopped by the one next to the Budweiser Brewhouse at Hartsfield-Jackson, where the offices were tidy and comfortable and looked ideal for a nap. But at 65 cents a minute, dozing off for a few hours could end up costing hundreds of dollars.

On the suggestion of *Stuck at the Airport*, a handy guidebook by Harriet Baskas that's also available online through the Expedia Web site (www.expedia.com/daily/airports), I caught a late train out to Concourse E to get some culture. And here Hartsfield-Jackson somewhat redeemed itself.

The airport has over 200 pieces in its permanent art collection, and space for rotating exhibits. At E-36 I admired Gregor Turk's intricate ceramic maps, and at E-30 I enjoyed Joni Mabe's outsized versions of bottle-cap folk art. My only complaint was that much of the art was displayed high in the clerestories of the departure-gate waiting areas, which meant a lot of neck craning and picking your way through feet and rollaboards. I recommend touring the galleries after midnight, when the terminal empties out.

I left Atlanta for home around noon the next day—wistful, as always on the last day of a vacation, but somewhat consoled by a three-hour layover at Dulles International Airport. Upon landing there I immediately boarded one of the airport's "mobile lounges," which roam the Plains of Fairfax like mechanical brontosauruses. I wanted to see the swooping concrete terminal by Eero Saarinen—a great exclamation point among many drab semicolons and periods—which was built about the same time as his TWA terminal at Kennedy.

The detour was well worth it. I stood and admired the terminal's vast, pendulous underbelly as other travelers pooled and eddied around me. Walter Kirn nicely captured the appeal of such a moment in his 2001 novel, *Up in the Air*. "Stopping off in transit beats arriving," he wrote. "There's the feeling of visiting an island, of stepping, briefly and sweetly, out of time into a scene you've had absolutely no hand in and have no designs on, no intentions toward."

Just so. An airport is neither here nor there; it's that interesting space in between. And I suggest you visit soon, before all the wrong people show up and ruin it.

*Wayne Curtis is the author of* And a Bottle of Rum: A History of the New World in 10 Cocktails, *published this summer.*



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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

BY EVAN EISENBERG

**What is your return policy?**
All our products carry a 100 percent lifetime guarantee. You may return them at any time and for any reason. However, we regret that we cannot offer refunds, credit, or exchanges.

**What are the system requirements?**
While our products are compatible with all platforms, for optimal performance we recommend:

- W. Europe, N. America, or equivalent
- 200K USD per annum or higher
- Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or Methodist (download application forms)
- 20 kHz moral processor or less
- 1.25-year memory or less

**Why does evil exist?**
Our quality-control procedures are among the most stringent in the industry. However, while we are responsible for the objective quality of our products, we are not responsible for your subjective experience of them. If you have not done so already, please read the About section of this site. Note that at the end of each day of Creation, God observes that it was good. At no point does He ask, "Was it good for you, too?"

**How can I get customer support?**
Telephone support is available seven days a week, from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. EST, except during monsoon season. Please note that our options have changed.

**What is the meaning of life?**
Life is a fountain.

**Are there any side effects?**
As with any such product, there are side effects in some people. The most common side effects reported during testing were heartbreak, disappointment, illness, aging, and death.

**When is monsoon season?**
Generally, from two days before the Cart Festival of Lord Jagannatha to one week after Krishna's Birthday.

**What are your shipping options?**
We currently offer Surface Mail, Carrier Pigeon (4 ounces or less), Pony Express, Naked Mole Rat, Capillary Action, Gravity (customers below 1,200 feet), and Continental Drift. See the Shipping Options table for rates and estimated times.

**Can I get a venereal disease from a laptop computer?**
Our latest security update (2.4.6.8) protects against viruses, worms, and crabs, but not spirochetes. To reduce the risk to zero or less, use commonsense precautions, such as:

- cleaning all ports once a week with a cotton swab dipped in retsina;
- not accepting cookies unless sealed in their original packaging;
- wearing a slicker or heavy raincoat while accessing adult content.

**My nose just fell off. Is it too late to seek treatment?**
Yes.

**Why me?**
Some people see the hand of God in their lives, some only the finger. ("There is a special sparrow in the fall in Providence." —Edward de Vere, Rhode Island Audubon Society)

If you are having difficulty, please check the system requirements (above). If you are certain that you meet all requirements, the problem may be metaphysical.

**What is the meaning of "Life is a fountain"?**
This section of our FAQ page is currently under construction. Please check back later. Knock knock.

**Who's there?**
Agamemnon.

**Agamemnon who?**
Come now, how frequently is that question asked?

**How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?**
Two to three dry cords (256 to 384 cubic feet) per hour.

**Do you love me?**
To us, you are a person, not a number. Our aim is to give undivided personal attention to the unique needs of each of our valued customers, insofar as they are interchangeable with those of our other valued customers. Other restrictions may apply.

**How many deaths will it take till he knows that too many people have died?**
$n + 1$.

**When are we going to be there?**
Soon.

*Evan Eisenberg is the author of* The Ecology of Eden *and the newly revised* The Recording Angel.



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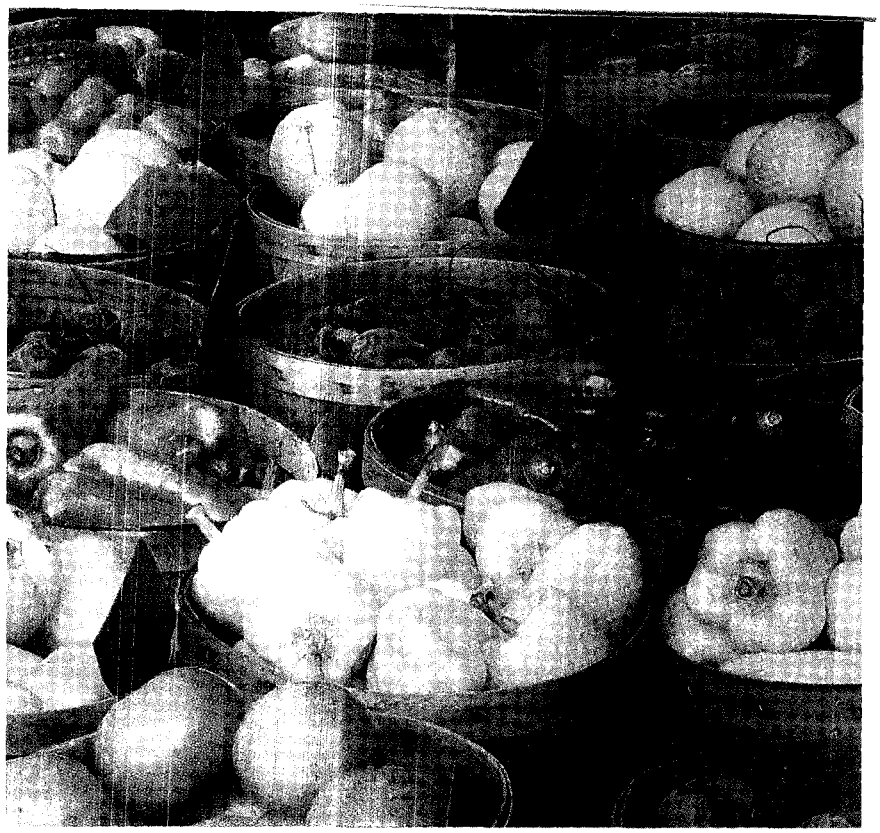
FOOD

# Deliverance

*The future of shopping for fresh fruits and vegetables*

BY CORBY KUMMER



Unless you happen to be a farmer or a particularly dedicated gardener, this summer you'll face the annual decision about where to buy your produce. The supermarket seems so bland and somehow so wrong if you know there are working farms anywhere within, say, a forty-five-minute drive. Why not pick your own? Why not befriend a local farmer? Or why not make this the year you plant cardoons and salsify instead of just tomatoes and zucchini?

Chances are, of course, you will do none of these things—you'll just hope the expensive Whole Foods–style supermarket you go to actually has some local produce. Quality-minded supermarkets such as Whole Foods are indeed making more efforts every summer to offer at least some produce grown in the same state. That's not the same, though, as knowing the people who grow your food, or buying the food grown closest to you.

Convenience trumps ideals in everyday life, and sometimes the farmers' market is inconvenient. Sometimes you long for the days when phone numbers had five digits and city grocers wrote down your delivery list with soft-leaded pencils on brown paper bags. Their successors are online grocery services, which promise infinite choice along with delivery when and where you want it. But big companies burned through hundreds (and hundreds) of millions of dollars trying to get online home-delivery services up and running, and just a few survive, including Safeway, Peapod (affiliated with Stop & Shop and Giant), and mywebgrocer.com.

These services are not built around local produce. But some online companies *are* building their businesses around produce for people whose wants go beyond convenience. FreshDirect, for example, succeeds in delivering high-quality food of all kinds—and even some local produce—to New Yorkers. And around the country, mom-and-pop online services that deliver organic produce are surviving with pluck, hope, and a few vans. The most admirable choice of all is a CSA (for Community Supported Agriculture), which can be convenient and is certainly more directly helpful to local farmers than even the farmers' market. Joining one might be this summer's resolution. And if you happen to live near one of the growing number of online produce-delivery companies, come winter you could have a new kind of Web adventure, and help a struggling businessperson too.

FreshDirect began with the same idea that many Web delivery services had: offer home delivery of groceries ordered online at reasonably competitive rates by eliminating the cost of bricks-and-mortar markets. Produce could be a good bit fresher than from a supermarket. Fruits and vegetables need not pass through a wholesaler or dawdle at some entrepôt, wilting by the day. They need not sit in supermarket bins at or near room temperature, wilting by the hour. Instead, produce could come by refrigerated truck to the company's refrigerated order center and then travel by refrigerated van to your refrigerator, sparkling with freshness. Entire days could be cut out of the trip from farm to table.

You couldn't select your own produce, of course. Not being able to see and touch the goods is part of the trade-off in ordering anything online. It's a sacrifice for anyone who squeezes peaches and scrutinizes lettuce for black leaves—an unacceptable sacrifice, many cooks say. But once children or long work hours enter the picture, even proud shoppers buckle. FreshDirect aims to ease the pain by providing more information than most markets do—one of the happier aspects of the trade-off. And it wants its delivered produce to match the pictures, which online goods often don't; all of its photographs are of sample fruits and vegetables actually on the premises.

The expenses and risks of setting up an online company that ships fresh produce are exceptionally high—so high that Webvan, the most ambitious of the start-ups that set out to do this on a national scale, lost $830 million and went bankrupt before delivering a single box on the East Coast. It had already rigged out an elaborate warehouse in Baltimore—"a ghost town," David McInerney, who oversees FreshDirect's product development, told me when I visited the company's headquarters



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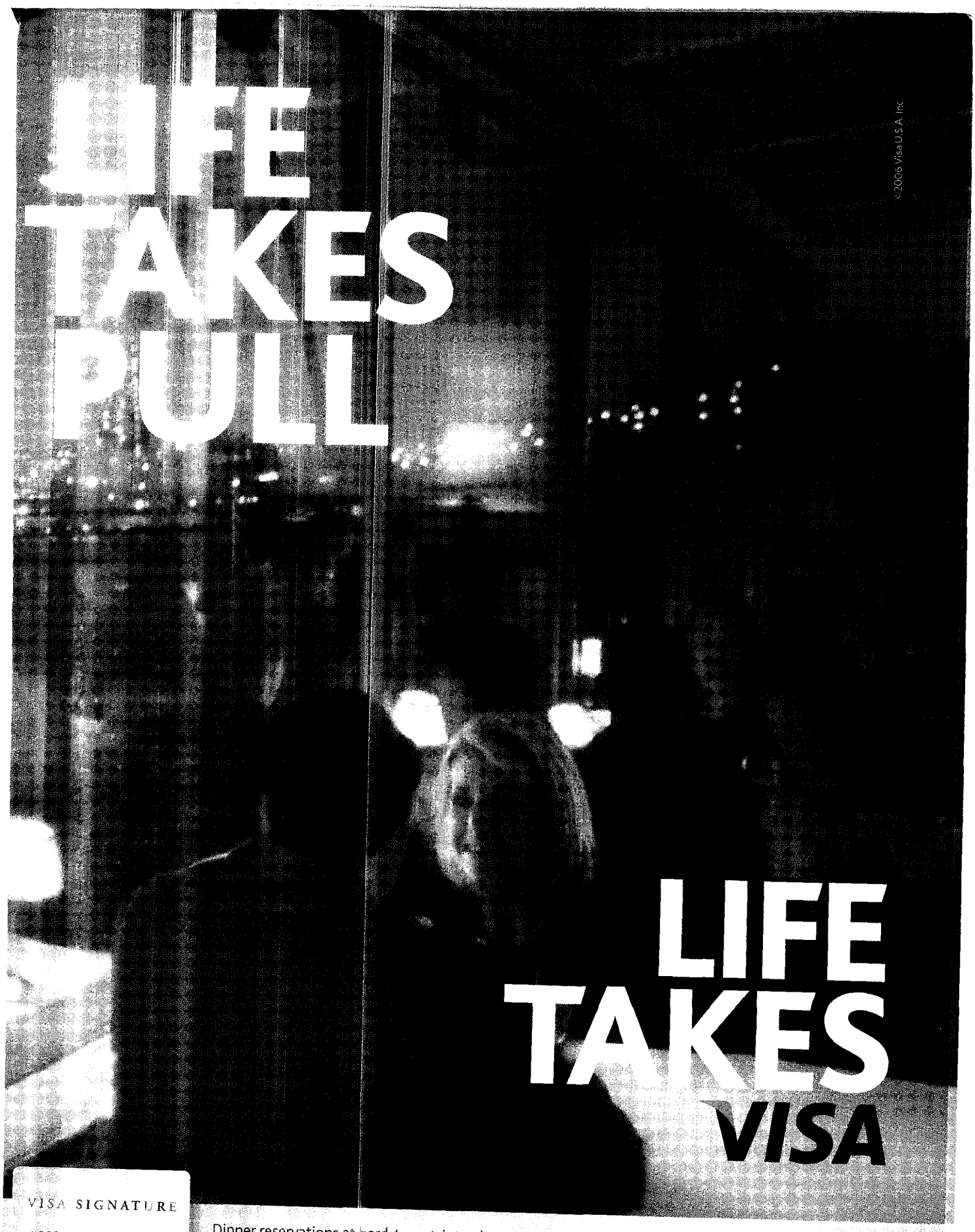


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## ZINS ONLINE

*A few choice wines for summer, and where to find them*

Visiting winery Web sites—to find, say, a good Zinfandel, which seems to go with any dish based on vegetables—is a good deal less frustrating than it was before last year, when a Supreme Court ruling eased shipping directly from winery to customer. Here are some informative and entertaining sites to help you find a wine that, despite its power, is often the red you want on a summer evening.

**Cardinal Zin, Bonny Doon, bonnydoonvineyard.com**
Randall Grahm has long been America's wittiest writer on wine, as well as the maker of offbeat wines that attract cult followings. Like his famous winery newsletter, written from his home base of Santa Cruz, his Web site merits Most Fun in Class honors (his biographical note is called "The man behind the curtain" and features his head bobbing in front of a green pipe organ with urns shooting flames). Cardinal Zin—"a rich, fragrant chocolate cherry bomb which requires no fire suppression equipment"—has from the start been one of his greatest hits.

**Sonoma County Old Vine Zinfandel, Ravenswood, ravenswood-wine.com**
Since its first vintage, in 1976, Ravenswood has made itself practically synonymous with Zinfandel, and was among the first California wineries to make people recognize the name of the grape and to change the grape's jug-wine image (borrowing from Grahm's punning tendencies, it calls its promotional cross-country events this summer the "Zinfomaniac Tour"). Sonoma County Old Vine Zinfandel gives a pure sense of the character that drew Joel Peterson, the winemaker, to a little-known and little-esteemed grape.

**Amador Zinfandel, Tulocay Winery, available from crushwineandspirits.com**
Neal Rosenthal, a New York wine importer whose taste in wine and food I trust completely (his own site is madrose.com), calls Bill Cadman, who began his small and purposely modest Napa Valley winery in 1975, an "unheralded genius." Cadman's straightforward but subtle wines are the only California ones Rosenthal will sell. This is a ripe, powerful, high-alcohol wine—but like all good Zinfandels, it has enough acidity to cut through the jammy fruit.

**ZAP, zinfandel.org**
Zinfandel Advocates & Producers is a nonprofit group for winemakers and "advocates" who love the grape. It provides ample information on Zinfandel and is sponsoring a seminar in Napa, July 7–9—called, naturally, the Zinposium.

and order center, near the Queens entrance to the Midtown Tunnel.

FreshDirect bought much of its equipment from Webvan and wrote a comparatively modest business plan—guaranteeing delivery within two hours, for instance, rather than the unrealistic half hour Webvan had promised. Order baskets travel on elevated hooks from one part of the plant to another; bags of beets whiz down wheeled conveyor platforms to a box waiting on a sort of trolley track ready to go to the deli department. The whole system—from kitchen to cheese room to butcher and fish cutter to dry-goods area—looks like a miniature ride in a food theme park, with neat cardboard boxes instead of, say, giant teacups. It is seldom shown to visitors, McInerney said, for fear of revealing a process that reportedly cost $100 million to create.

On my visit I was impressed by the breads, which are made from scratch by Craig Kominiak, an experienced baker, and baked until almost done, to be finished at home (the only way to compensate for the cold storage at every step, which destroys the texture of fresh-baked bread); the cheese selection bought from Artisanal, one of the country's best cheesemongers and the city's best; the coffees, which are roasted by Patrick Spillman, an enthusiastic and dedicated roaster, whose technique and selection I have long admired; and the workers chopping vegetables and cutting and marinating fish for entrées that looked equal to what many restaurant kitchens turn out. The real future of the company, McInerney, a trained chef with an impressive résumé, implied, is in prepared foods: the sesame-marinated skirt steak, the Tobago wild blackfin tuna kabobs, the thin-crust frozen pizzas that, he said, even the staff was buying.

Local produce is the trickiest challenge. A quarter of FreshDirect's produce sales are organic. But most of the produce comes from California—as it does to supermarkets across the country and also to the mom-and-pop organic delivery services, among them Planet Organics (planetorganics.com), which serves a large swath of California around the Bay Area; Newleaf (newleafnatural.net), which delivers to Chicago and Evanston; Greenling (austinorganicdelivery.com), which serves greater Austin and was begun by three college rugby teammates; Urban Organic (urbanorganic.net), which serves all New York City boroughs and surrounding areas in other states; and Boston Organics (bostonorganics.com). The founder of Boston Organics, Jeff Barry, a Peace Corps veteran with a master's degree in environmental economics and business, modeled it on Planet Organics and began by borrowing money from his grandfather for a delivery van and pasting up fliers in the most alternative and academic of Boston's alternative and academic neighborhoods.

All these companies aim to be a cross between a farmers' market and a standard delivery service, and most have been started by idealists on shoestring budgets. Like FreshDirect, they offer customers shorter farm-to-table time, the convenience of home delivery (Barry told me that many customers give his drivers keys to an entryway or a back door), and local produce in season. They deliver more of it, too: McInerney said that not until last year did he start contracting with local farms in the hope of giving customers something of the experience of the Union Square Greenmarket, which he and every other New York foodie visit religiously. (Tellingly, he featured Satur Farms, on the North Fork of Long Island, owned by Paulette Satur and Eberhard Müller, executive chef at Bayard's and a former chef at Le Bernardin and Lutèce, who provides



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recipes both to customers and to the company.) But their scale and ambition are far smaller. The model is usually to deliver a weekly box of vegetables and fruits. Customers can change the size of the box, but they have limited control over its contents—they can alter the ratio of vegetables to fruits, say, or omit something they know they won't eat.

But any year-round business must rely on large-scale growers in California and Florida during the winter and spring. The reputation of organic produce is suffering in a way that few of the longtime advocates for the adoption of national organic standards could have predicted. Aside from costs to the environment in fuel for long-haul refrigerated transport, there are costs to local economies too. The large and increasingly consolidated companies that run organic farms with national distribution seldom do any more to help local communities, let alone small farmers, than bad old industrial farming did.

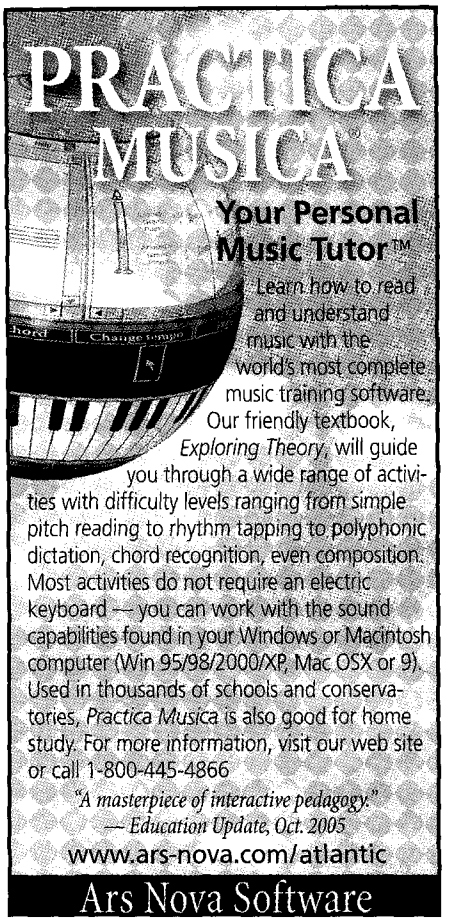
It's always something when you're trying to be an "ethical gourmet," as Jay Weinstein, a chef and journalist, titles his new cookbook. "Buying organic anywhere is good," he writes, trying to summarize a simmering argument. "But buying from a source that circumvents the environmental costs of transporting, processing, and distributing the food is especially beneficial to the environment." He describes attitudes about the higher cost of organic produce: "Take it from me. I've been a personal chef to clients who represent the top 1 percent of U.S. income, and they're more concerned about the price of milk than the middle class is."

Short of growing your own food, the most ethical way to get produce is probably to join a CSA, in which members sign up in the late winter and spring for weekly boxes. (The price of a subscription varies widely but often starts at about $350.) You give up the choice and immediate gratification of going to a farmers' market, and you have to trust that the farm you subscribe to grows food you like and is good at it. But CSAs, which originated in Switzerland, Germany, and Japan in the 1970s and began in earnest in this country in the mid-1980s, provide direct support and assurance to farmers in a way that farmers' markets do not. Subscribers share in the risks as well as the abundance of the farm, knowing they will get a reduced selection at the beginning and end of each growing season, and agreeing to pick up their boxes, either at the farm or at a central point such as a local cooperative market. According to a 1999 study from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, relative to the average U.S. farmer CSA farmers tend to be young, financially vulnerable, highly educated, more-often female, and overwhelmingly white.

According to Elizabeth Henderson, the author of *Sharing the Harvest* (a definitive guide to CSAs that is about to appear in a revised edition), in the early days the challenges of supplying a decent variety of produce every week were daunting enough that some farmers gave up. But Henderson sees a "burst happening now," both in farms ready to become CSAs and in subscribers eager to join. (To find one near you, go to wilson.edu/csacenter, a resource center at Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, that is named for Robyn Van En, a Massachusetts farmer who was the Jenny Appleseed of the CSA movement.) Henderson warmly described the sense of community that forms around CSAs—especially when members are trading recipes, usually online. "So much of CSAs is talking about food," she said.

Learning to cook, of course, is learning to cook what's in front of you. CSAs require improvisation—and remaining undaunted by a box of mostly beet greens, radishes, and peas. But they also offer a rich experience of seasonal flux and abundance as nothing else short of vegetable gardening does. And they can get you out of a meal-planning rut, especially if you try to sit down to dinner at home as often as possible—the route to happiness and good health, as we are constantly told. "If you buy local food in season, meals will vary without planning and effort," Nina Planck, who grew up on a Virginia farm, promises in her new *Real Food*. It's a lesson easily taken to heart at the height of the summer's abundance—one that might even linger as the days grow short. ▲

*Corby Kummer is a senior editor of* The Atlantic.

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TECHNOLOGY

# The Electric Mind Meld

*Two new elegantly conceived programs help you unjam your digital life*

BY JAMES FALLOWS

What makes some software "interesting," as opposed to merely usable? For one, software seems interesting when it allows you to see or consider information in new ways. With utilities like DevonThink Professional, for the Macintosh, or dtSearch, for PCs, you can run "semantic searches" for e-mails or files on your own computer and find passages whose themes are related even if they don't share specific key words. (When you are doing key-word searches of files on your own PC, nothing beats the old standby X1, which costs $74.95 and up from X1.com or comes in a slightly different free version from Yahoo, at desktop.yahoo.com.)

Interesting software also tends to be extendable, or customizable. Personalized touches can be as simple as refining a set of bookmarks for a Web browser, or as complex as assigning long command sequences to a few keystrokes with the very handy PC program ActiveWords.

And, as I am shown by previews of two extremely interesting new programs, software can even be intriguing on an aesthetic level, by virtue of the creative choices that go into its design.

The two programs I have in mind are OneNote, from Microsoft, and Chandler, from the Open Source Applications Foundation, in San Francisco. In all the conspicuous ways, the programs are each other's opposites. One is from the world's biggest and most successful software company; the other, from a shoestring operation funded mainly by one man—Mitchell Kapor, the founder of Lotus. OneNote sells for about $100 on its own and is offered, like Word and Outlook, as part of the "suite" of Office products that is generally regarded as Microsoft's cash cow. Chandler will be free, as will several related utilities and programming tools now being developed by Kapor's organization. OneNote runs only on PCs or tablet computers with Windows software. Chandler is being designed to run on PCs, Macs, Linux machines, and about any other plausible system. The first release of OneNote went on sale three years ago, and a significantly improved version, OneNote 2007, will be available late this year. Chandler has been in the works since 2001, but won't be ready for mainstream use for at least another year or two. At the moment, it exists in a limited version that mainly serves a "dog food" function—that is, its own designers use it for their daily tasks as a forced exposure to its strengths and limitations, a practice known as "eating your own dog food."

But the programs share a fundamental goal, which is to keep lowering the barrier between the way computers work and the way people naturally think. The tech world has come miles in this direction since the days when you had to learn obscure commands to make a computer do anything at all. The barrier OneNote aims to surmount is one created by Microsoft's own success in establishing Word and Outlook, plus the overall Windows file system, as the dominant standards for writing, calendar keeping, and workplace communication.

By Microsoft logic, specific programs are "right" for specific purposes: Word if you are writing something down, Outlook's Tasks list if you have a to-do item. Chris Pratley, OneNote's chief designer, saw it differently. "The key insight I had," he wrote in 2004 in his OneNote Blog, "... was that [the program] had to let you capture the thought or piece of info as you had it, without forcing you to deal with any software goo up front." It is a sign of the charming breeziness of his blog that he refers to his company's mainstay offerings as "goo." (Disclosure: I worked on the Word design team at Microsoft in 1999, and when I did, Pratley was a friend and supervisor.)

"Properly" capturing and recording in the Office system the information coming at you all day long, Pratley wrote, can be more trouble than it's worth. For a new phone number, you have to switch to Outlook's Contacts view and fill out a form. If you jot down something in Word, you have to create and name a new file to store it, eventually littering your hard drive with zillions of confusingly named files.

The response to this problem, via OneNote, is a kind of all-purpose magic clipboard, or "notebook." It runs while you are doing other work, and whenever you want you can pull into it information



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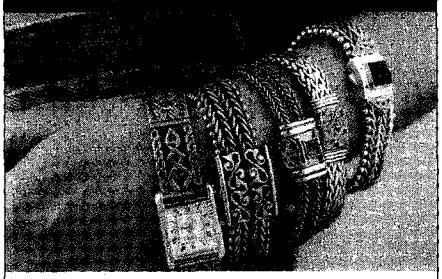

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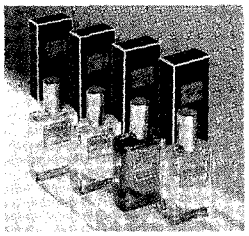

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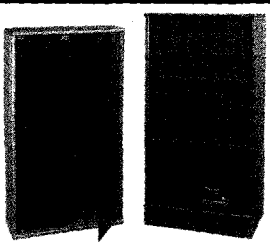

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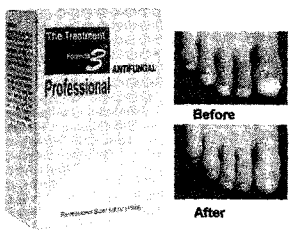


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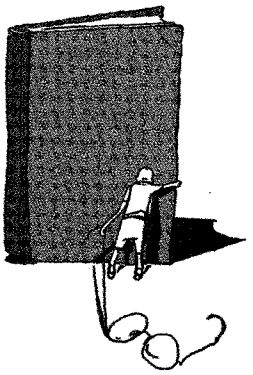

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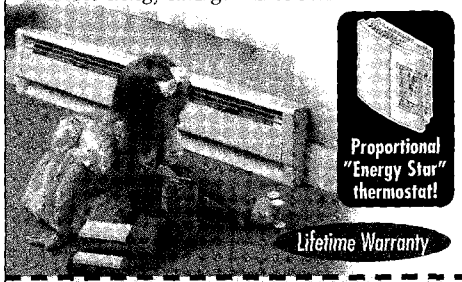


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This new release is integrated with other Office programs in a way that actually helps the user, as opposed to just advancing the corporate brand. You can write down an errand to do or person to call, and, with a keystroke or two, convert it to an item on your calendar or to-do list. You don't have to remember to save the file you're working on—or worry about what name you gave it or what directory it's stored in, since everything you add to OneNote is saved continuously and is retrievable through the very effective indexed search or through the labels you applied. You can easily delete clippings or notes you decide you don't want anymore. I've started dumping all my interview transcripts into this program, rather than saving each one as a separate Word file. In OneNote, I can have a single page show my typed-up notes of an interview, plus Web links about the person I met, plus the audio file I made on a digital recorder during the meeting—which I can click on if I want to review some passage. A feature in OneNote's new release addresses a woe of today's mobile workforce, by automatically synchronizing the notes that are kept on your laptop and those on your desktop machine when they are networked to each other. This auto-sync feature reflects an assumption that users should not need to keep track of the program's underlying



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file structure, which is different from the standard Windows structure.

There is a lot more to this program, which you can see demonstrated in a seventeen-minute blogcast by Darren Strange, the U.K. product manager, at tinyurl.com/mjwcd, or read about, along with questions of software aesthetics, in Pratley's blog, at tinyurl.com/k5k78.

Chandler has the potential to be at least as compelling, but for now it's mainly just potential. Five years ago, Mitchell Kapor announced that he was committing $5 million of his own money toward development of an open-source "personal information manager." This was a software category Kapor had practically invented at Lotus in the 1980s with his program Agenda, which I raved about in these pages in 1992, just before Kapor's successor, Jim Manzi, decided to kill it. Agenda was special to me and 100,000 or so other devotees because it let you enter information in one central place and then retrieve or structure it as appropriate. It was not special to Manzi: 100,000 paid users was not a mass market. Or, as Mitchell Kapor put it to me, there was little commercial demand from users for a sophisticated information manager because of "a lack of imagination that things could be better—there was no shining beacon of America across the seas to make them realize they didn't have to be oppressed and imprisoned" by their mediocre software.

Kapor's attempt to create that beacon has gone more slowly than he foresaw. Despite substantial follow-up grants from foundations and universities, the team developing Chandler has so far released only a partly functional calendar application. Scott Rosenberg, of *Salon* magazine, became an "embedded journalist" on the Chandler project from 2003 to 2005 in order to investigate why good software is so hard to make. (His book about Chandler and complex software design, *Dreaming in Code*, will be published in November.) "It is taking a long time, but anyone who writes off Chandler is being short-sighted," he told me. "They are on a quest."

So what is worth waiting for from Chandler? The easiest way to illustrate its concept is through its plan for handling e-mail. From a computer's perspective, all e-mail messages are similar to one another—and different from all other digital items, like Web pages or calendar entries or to-dos on a task list. What the computer can detect is the form and structure of the digital item: e-mails have headers and come in from remote senders, calendar appointments are entered in the calendar program, and so on. Thus Outlook and the few comparable programs store e-mail in one big in-box, with subsequent crude classifications—read versus unread, flagged versus unflagged, those assigned to special folders versus others.

For the human being sitting at the computer, however, e-mail messages are not all the same. "One e-mail could be an invitation, so it's actually a calendar item," Mimi Yin, a Chandler lead designer, told me. "A series of five e-mails actually should be one short chat session. Another one is reference content, one is a funny URL, and another is a specific to-do assignment. 'Flagging' the e-mail just tells you to look at it again, but you can't add semantics to say why."

Rather than letting flagged or unread e-mail pile up, as it often does in Outlook or other mail systems, waiting for you to figure out what you meant to do with it, the completed version of Chandler will funnel nearly all incoming information to its "dashboard." This will let you easily process incoming data based on its real content—e-mails requesting a response or appointment will look different from those just containing reference material—and then will present the data to you at the times you've asked to be reminded of it. Another reason I'm a sucker for Chandler's approach is that it draws inspiration from the productivity expert David Allen's "Getting Things Done" strategy, previously described in these pages.

Exactly how the dashboard and the rest of Chandler will work, when they do work, is laid out in an engrossing series of postings by Yin and her colleagues on their Web site. Tinyurl.com/sxdk5 is a good introduction, as is tinyurl.com/n3esu; each has links to many more. These programs are interesting, and so are the minds behind them.

*James Fallows is a national correspondent for* The Atlantic.


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COMMERCE AND CULTURE

# The Next Starbucks?

*How massage went from the strip club to the strip mall*

BY VIRGINIA POSTREL

When you step off a plane in Indianapolis, one of the first things you see—right next to the directions to baggage claim and ground transport—is a sign advertising massages, from the fifteen-minute "Fast Track" for $18 to the half-hour "Extended Stay" for $33. Travelers can find similar services at airports in Providence, Anchorage, Cedar Rapids, and Baltimore. The Seattle-based Massage Bar has expanded from Sea-Tac to airports serving Nashville, Newark, and Washington, D.C.

And you don't have to go to the airport. Car washes in Dallas and Austin offer chair massages while you wait. Tired shoppers can get them at the Fashion Show mall on the Vegas Strip, at Whole Foods Markets, and at many large bookstores. Massage breaks are regular features at business conventions and sporting events.

Once a specialized therapy for injured athletes, an indulgence for the idle rich, or a cover for prostitution, massage has become a legitimate and seemingly ubiquitous enterprise. Between August 2004 and July 2005, about 47 million American adults got at least one massage, up 2 million from the previous year, according to the American Massage Therapy Association's annual consumer survey.

Nationally, massage revenue is variously estimated at $6 billion to $11 billion a year. The AMTA estimates that there are between 230,000 and 280,000 massage therapists practicing in the United States, up from between 160,000 and 200,000 in 2000. Massage is one answer to the question, Where will new jobs come from?

It's also the sort of growth industry that doesn't count for much in our public debates about the economy. It's new but not high tech. It's flourishing but fairly small, with annual revenues about the same as Enterprise Rent-A-Car, the snack-chips business, or Hollywood's domestic box office.

The massage industry's product is invisible, less "real" than a hamburger or a video game. It doesn't contribute to national power or prestige the way semiconductors or aircraft do. It doesn't create world-famous stars like sports or the movies. Its establishments are small, often run by a single individual, and most of its practitioners lack a college education. It is literally touchy-feely.

When Americans think about the economy, we tend to focus on familiar, "serious" businesses—computers or autos or high finance. We don't notice Starbucks until there's one on every corner, changing not only what we drink but also how we live and work. Massage may not be the biggest new industry or the most influential, but it's a microcosm of how commerce and culture interact. The same creativity and resilience that built the industries of the past, and the ways of life that evolved with them, are still at work, spinning out new enterprises serving new values.

As a business, massage has two basic problems. The first is that prostitution is generally illegal. A brothel can't openly advertise its services: no "Madame Julia's House of Great Sex." Instead, Madame Julia pretends she runs a "massage parlor," which creates confusion, and sometimes legal obstacles, for people who want to buy and sell back rubs.

The second problem is that most potential customers consider massage a luxury—an optional indulgence, if not a slightly shameful extravagance. So they're acutely sensitive to price. A massage business can't pass high labor costs along to consumers without suffering a rapid drop in sales.

One way to attack these problems is to declare massage a medical service. Hence in 1983 the American Massage & Therapy Association dropped its ampersand to create a new profession: "massage therapy." Customers and legal authorities can be pretty sure—though not 100 percent certain—that a massage *therapist* isn't selling sex. A therapist not only will keep the client discreetly draped with a sheet but also will take a reassuringly clinical approach to kneading naked flesh. A *masseuse*, on the other hand, may well be a hooker in a skimpy disguise.

Calling massage a "therapy" also suggests that it's good for you, which means you don't have to feel guilty about spending money on it. You might even be able to pass the bill on to your insurance company (only rarely, so far). Massage therapists understandably want their clients to



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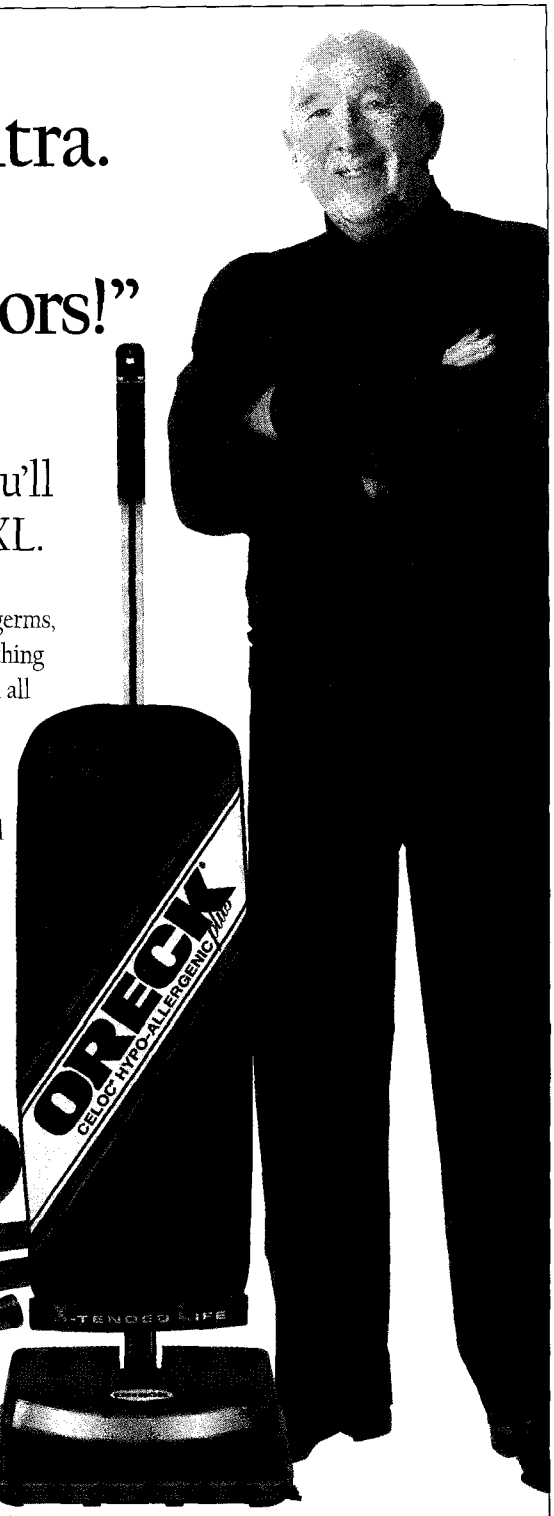


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think of massage as a necessity. "At one point in my career I had to defend massage against the 'prostitution attitude,'" says Brenda L. Griffith, a massage therapist in Richmond, Virginia, who has been practicing since 1988. "Now I have to defend massage against the 'pampering attitude.'" Many of her clients do, in fact, have chronic ailments for which massage offers some relief.

But relentlessly touting the healing power of touch makes too many massage therapists sound like quacks. The medical strategy also treats clients as patients, eliminating potential customers who feel healthy. It attracts clients by turning everyday life into a disease. Who, after all, doesn't suffer from stress? Like graphic and industrial designers who refuse to talk about aesthetics, massage therapists seem embarrassed to say they make people feel good.

As something of a massage addict, I don't buy the medical line, and I don't think it's necessary. Assuming it's not too vigorous, a massage not only feels good but also helps me think. It's relaxing, but not so relaxing that I fall asleep. Like a nice glass of wine with dinner or an all-white Heavenly Bed in a hotel room, a massage break adds a little pleasure to everyday life. Even if the massage does nothing for my health, I consider the money well spent.

Humans are sensory beings. Massage doesn't need to justify pleasing our muscles and skin any more than music has to justify pleasing our ears. Chefs don't have to call themselves "nutritional therapists." Hairstylists don't have to pretend that gray hair is a disease. Enjoyment is a perfectly fine reason to get a massage.

So I was relieved to meet David Palmer, a massage-industry pioneer who believes in the intrinsic value of touch, whether or not it's "therapy." Palmer doesn't even use the T-word, referring instead to "massage practitioners." Like the people who built the first personal computers, he represents a special Bay Area blend of bohemian self-actualization and entrepreneurial drive. He, too, is a commercial and cultural innovator—as the inventor of the contemporary chair massage, Palmer is the man responsible for all those public shoulder rubs in airports and elsewhere.

In 1982, he was running a San Francisco massage school and worried that not enough graduates were finding jobs. If massage was so great, why didn't more people want it?

The answer was pretty obvious: everything about the experience scared off potential clients. "If you want to make sure massage didn't make it into the mainstream," Palmer says, "make it as expensive, inconvenient, and scary as possible. Force people to go into a private room behind closed doors, take off all their clothes with a stranger, lie down on a table, get slathered with oil for an hour, and pay $70, $80, $90 for the privilege."

Massage needed a form that was cheap, quick, convenient, and fully clothed. Palmer developed an acupressure-based routine, or *kata*, that took just fifteen minutes and was done while the client sat on a drummer's stool. Although a chair massage might cost more per minute than a table massage, the price for the experience was much lower. The next step was to create a special chair to support the client's head, arms, and legs.

"Once you have a massage chair," says Palmer, "then the massage industry thinks, Oh, this must be real." Once massage chairs start showing up everywhere, potential clients don't think of massage as a shady business. And more people decide that they, too, might want to give massages for a living.

One obstacle to the industry's growth is the fact that massage is labor intensive, the quintessential hands-on service. A massage entrepreneur can't automate the experience—those vibrating chairs are a lousy substitute for the real thing—and can't outsource the labor to low-wage foreigners (unless, of course, the price includes airfare and hotel accommodations). Giving an hour-long massage takes an hour of someone's time, and that someone has to be paid.

But one way to build a new industry is to create a more satisfying way to work. In today's affluent United States, people are remarkably willing to take lower wages, fewer benefits, and less security in exchange for less stress.

Less stress means flexible hours and enjoyable work, not a more reliable



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income. Massage pay is decent—doing twenty hours of actual massage a week, a practitioner will likely make $30,000 to $35,000 a year—but therapists get paid only if clients show up. For most massage therapists, having a fulfilling job seems to be worth the uncertainty.

David Palmer, the massage-chair inventor, says he not only wants "to make touch a social value" but also to make massage a source of meaningful work. "There is something seriously sad about a culture where people spend most of their waking lives doing something that doesn't have meaning—inherent, intrinsic meaning—for them," he says. He worries that massage still isn't popular enough to absorb the skyrocketing number of people who'd like to practice it: some 70,000 Americans graduated from massage schools last year.

So Palmer and an ambitious young business partner, Sam Keller, are out to create the Starbucks of chair massage—to turn a fragmented, feel-good industry into a ubiquitous brand. Their new enterprise, Zubio, is all about creating consistent expectations, for both client and practitioner.

Instead of plopping down a massage chair in someone else's store or office, Zubio installs permanent, semi-private kiosks. It trains practitioners in its specific *kata* and pays them by the hour, plus tips and stock options (this is the Bay Area, after all). Clients make appointments either on the booth's touchscreen or via the Internet. One person can run the booth. concentrating on giving massages rather than handling appointments and paperwork. "It's high tech meets high touch," says Keller.

Zubio opened its first kiosk in December and rolled out a couple more in the spring. Whether America is ready for the Starbucks of massages—and whether Zubio is it—remains to be seen. But Palmer's dissatisfaction and determination have already changed the world. Twenty years ago, after all, no airport traveler looked for a chair massage. Especially in Indianapolis.

*Virginia Postrel is a contributing editor of* The Atlantic *and the author of* The Substance of Style *and* The Future and Its Enemies. *Her blog,* The Dynamist, *can be found at http://www.dynamist.com/weblog.*


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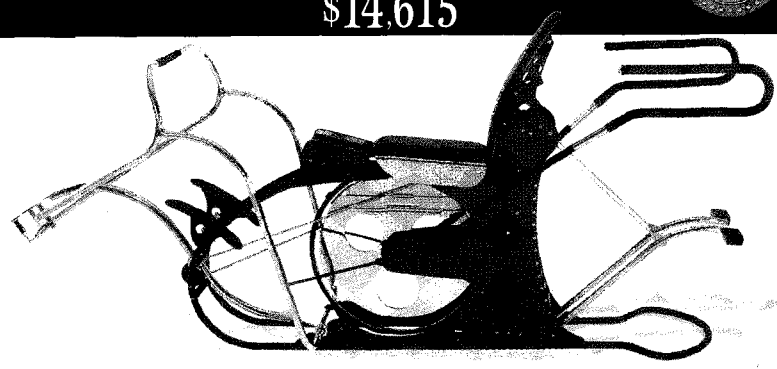

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SPORTS

# Spin Doctors

*Racket technology saved tennis, and Roger Federer is proof*

BY TOM PERROTTA

Roger Federer should not exist. The twenty-four-year-old from Basel, Switzerland, has won three consecutive Wimbledon championships and dozens more titles, both major and minor, while rarely losing a match over the last three years. It's not the pace of his victories, however, that makes Federer such a marvel; it's how he wins—with perfectly placed serves, a devastating forehand, a flowing one-handed backhand, timely volleys, and feet as nimble as any the game has known. He's the sort of versatile player that the modern power game supposedly had snuffed out for good.

Fifteen years ago, a champion as sublime as Federer was unthinkable. With men like Pete Sampras, Richard Krajicek, and the six-foot-four-inch Goran Ivanisevic acing their opponents into submission, it seemed that the last days of tennis were near. Top players were becoming bigger, rackets more powerful, and, as the aces piled up, matches would become monotonous and the sport would die, one 150-mph serve at a time. There was no longer a place at the top for men in the mold of Rod Laver and John McEnroe. Pundits were calling for the elimination of the second serve, an increase in the height of the net, and even a return to the wooden racket.

Today tennis balls zip across the court at sharper angles. Rallies are not too long, as many complained in the days of Ivan Lendl and Mats Wilander, but not too short, either, as in the 1960s and 1970s, when serve-and-volley pervaded the sport. The mean speed of the game's fastest serves is higher—138 mph at Wimbledon last year, up from 132 mph in 2002, according to the International Tennis Federation—but return of serve has improved too, as evidenced by a flat trend for tiebreaks and aces at Grand Slam events since 1998. On the lawns of Wimbledon, widely considered the sport's fastest surface, the percentage of sets ending in tiebreaks—the more tiebreaks, the more servers can be said to be dominating the game—has remained around 16 percent since 2002, down from the 21 percent peak in 1989.

Ruling over this fast-paced and exhilarating brand of tennis is Federer. His tennis is art, a triumph of variety and precision over power that inspires awe among rivals and onlookers alike. "He's the best I've ever played against," Andre Agassi said after losing last year's U.S. Open final (Federer's second straight Open victory). For younger players, though, it's not so much awe as the flattery of imitation. "I love the way it's going," said Brad Gilbert, a former pro who has coached Agassi and Andy Roddick. "In the 1980s people were saying the game was going to become comical. But the juniors now, they are doing more. They watch Federer."

The tale of what tennis did not become begins with the racket, perhaps the most misunderstood implement in the history of sports. The composite, or "graphite," racket, made from carbon fibers and other materials including Kevlar, took over the game in the 1980s. Composite rackets are routinely cited as the villain behind the surge in power in tennis, yet it is these rackets that saved the game from becoming an utterly boring one. The fact is that composite rackets help players hit better ground strokes, impart more spin, and return rocket serves, but they do very little to speed up serves. In 1997, in a comparative test done by *Tennis* magazine, Mark Philippoussis, the six-foot-five, 217-pound Australian renowned for his powerful serve, averaged 124 mph when serving with his own composite racket. With a classic wooden racket, he averaged 122 mph.

Scientists explain this using a simple formula: ball velocity after impact divided by ball velocity before impact (the racket must be suspended freely or held firmly in hand, not clamped in place). The resulting number, called ACOR, for Apparent Coefficient of Restitution, is an indicator of how much energy a racket loses when it collides with a ball. If a ball approaches a racket at 100 mph and bounces off it at 40 mph, the ACOR is 0.4. A racket with a higher ACOR is a racket with more power. Crawford Lindsey, a partner at the United States Racquet Stringers Association and co-author of the influential *Physics and Technology of Tennis*, points out that wooden rackets, because of their greater weight, have a greater ACOR than most of the composite rackets on the market today (though only when struck dead center). Top players serve so much faster today not because of their rackets but because of their raw physical power. Male professional tennis players have grown roughly two or three inches taller and fifteen to twenty pounds heavier in the last thirty-five years, according to International Tennis Federation data.

While the racket does not impart speed to the serve, it has a lot to do with the accuracy and pace of forehands and backhands. Stiff carbon fibers produce a structurally sound racket at a lighter weight than wood—as little as nine ounces compared with fourteen or fifteen. Additional weight placed along the head, away from the handle, improves stability and prevents the racket from twisting or bending backward upon impact. As a result, the racket returns more energy to the incoming ball. It also has more power—a greater ACOR—for off-center hits. Put simply, it has a larger "sweet spot."

For pros, however, the single most important feature of the composite racket is its wider face: usually around ten inches compared with the eight- or nine-inch wooden rackets wielded by the likes of Tilden, Budge, and Laver. To create significant topspin, a player must tilt the racket forward by two to five degrees and swing from low to high. The extra space provided by the composite racket constitutes a greater margin of error against unwanted contact between the ball and frame. It lets the player swing faster, which creates more pace and more spin, which keeps the ball inbounds despite the higher speeds. A low-to-high swing of similar speed with a narrow wooden racket would end in



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horrendous mishits. (A swing of similar speed along a flat plane would launch the ball out of bounds.) The extra width of composite rackets allows today's bigger, stronger players to put more of their muscle into their strokes, yet maintain control because of the extra spin. "It's not 10 percent more spin," said Rod Cross, a professor at Sydney University and one of the co-authors of *The Physics and Technology of Tennis*. "It's like 400 percent more. If a player wants to return a ball with topspin, he has to reverse the spin of the incoming ball. With a wooden racket, you were lucky if you could bring the spin of the incoming ball to a halt."

*The patented topspin of Roger Federer*

Racket companies produce dozens of new products each year with advances in weight distribution, stiffness, and aerodynamics that aid amateurs, but none of it matters much to the best players in the world. For them, racket technology has remained more or less frozen since the 1980s, when composite frames gave them that all-important inch. Because pros do not lack for strength, they choose heavier rackets to provide more stability and control. Federer prefers a Wilson, just ninety square inches, that is very similar to the eighty-five-square-inch model Sampras used throughout his career. Among top professionals, only Agassi uses an "oversize" racket (in his case, 107 square inches). For most elite players, an oversize frame has no benefit over a midsize. The additional width (eleven inches compared to ten) allows the ball to travel farther along the string bed, but only if a player swings at a steep angle consistent with a topspin lob, not a ground-stroke drive.

Strings are the other technological variable in tennis rackets. It was once thought that stringing a racket tightly would increase power, while less tension would improve control. The opposite is actually true, though the differences are marginal: looser strings slightly increase power by turning the racket into a slingshot, while tighter strings add a bit of control by releasing the ball sooner, which lets players swing faster and brush up on the ball, creating topspin. Players routinely reinforce the myth that one type of string produces more spin than another. In the last four years, almost every top male has at some point switched from gut strings, made from cow intestines, to polyester strings—such as Luxilon—or to some combination of the two (usually polyester for the main strings, which travel from throat to tip, paired with gut on the cross strings, though Federer favors the opposite). Agassi, speaking to reporters recently, said Luxilon strings "really bite the ball," increasing spin.

This view, however, is unfounded. "The roughness of strings, the pattern of strings, the gauge, and the materials—none of that stuff makes any noticeable difference for spin," Lindsey said. "They probably are getting more spin, but it's not for the reason they are saying." Luxilon strings are stiffer than natural gut. This stiffness reduces ACOR ever so slightly, reducing power by 1 or 2 percent. Such a small decrease hardly registers on a radar gun, but it may shorten the maximum distance a ball travels by two or three feet. To compensate for that lost distance, Lindsey said, players swing harder, increasing pace and creating more spin. In essence, today's men are responding unconsciously to less powerful string materials that, combined with larger head sizes, let them vary the speed and spin and sharpen the angles.

Taken together, this science makes sense of the sport's evolution. Larger players of improved fitness have learned to push their rackets further—opening their stances, shortening their backswings, and swinging so forcefully that the energy they unleash lifts them off the ground. Federer and such players as Rafael Nadal, Marat Safin, and James Blake swing with such ferocity that they must use less powerful rackets in order to produce the spin and angles essential for attack. The rackets put brute force in the service of finesse. The players don't serve-and-volley much, fearing a sharply angled, heavily spun reply. They do, however, charge the net as needed. They punish short returns. They hit dazzling—and once impossible—crosscourt winners from outside the doubles alley. The game is a lot more interesting to watch.

All of this happened with no drastic rule changes and little interference from the sport's governing bodies. Just think if they had legislated a return to the wooden racket. The server would be striking the ball just as hard, but the returner, armed with a narrow racket that twists easily and can't impart much topspin, would stand helplessly at the baseline. Instead of serve-and-volley, there would be serve. "The game has adapted to the circumstances we were afraid of," Lindsey said, "and very quickly. Federer by himself is changing the whole game—back to an all-court game, only at a higher level. That's how evolution happens."

*Tom Perrotta writes about tennis for* The New York Sun *and* Tennis *magazine.*



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POST MORTEM

# The Swedes' Swingingest Swinger

*Vilgot Sjöman (1924–2006)*

BY MARK STEYN

*Director Vilgot Sjöman and actress Lena Nyman in* I Am Curious (Yellow)

For a brief moment, he was the most famous Swedish male on the planet. Before Björn Borg, before Benny and Björn from Abba, before ... well, hang on, let me have a think—ah, yes, before Sven-Goran Eriksson, the outgoing manager of the England soccer team. Before all those famous Swedes, there was Vilgot Sjöman. In the late sixties, he loomed large—not in the same sense as Anita Ekberg and Bibi Andersson, but in the same general vicinity. Sjöman made a movie called *Jag Ar Nyfiken—Gul*, or *I Am Curious (Yellow)*, or, in some billings, eschewing parentheses for a colon, *I Am Curious: Yellow*. As it happens, the colon was one of the few body parts not on display in the film. The British censors snipped eleven minutes out of it. U.S. Customs seized the prints when they showed up here, and *I Am Curious* was banned, which only made Americans even more curious, and by the time it was unbanned, in 1969, Vilgot Sjöman was a cause célèbre, and his $160,000 film was a monster smash.

You can't buy publicity like a government lawyer demanding to know, before the Supreme Court, whether the leading lady's lips had actually touched the party of the first part's parts. "I have a feeling," answered Sjöman noncommittally, "that it was possible for her just to have her lips a couple of millimeters above the penis." Below the title but above the penis, Lena Nyman—the "Swedish Hummingbird," as she was dubbed—was the art-house darling of the year. Liberated by the Court from the attentions of the Customs service, *Curious*, though playing only in New York and New Jersey, quickly became the highest-grossing foreign-language film in America—a record it held for almost a quarter century.

I saw the movie some years later in high school. I was one of a stampede of adolescent boys who signed up for the film society when it announced a screening of *I Am Curious (Yellow)*. The film society didn't waste its time with westerns or musicals or Buster Keaton retrospectives; it specialized in vaguely arty films with extensive nudity. "What is this *I Am Curious* thing?" some unfortunate classmate would ask, and the others would shoot him a pitying glance and pass him the famous photograph from the picture, of Sjöman's young protagonists embracing on a bed, and he'd stare at it with a faraway look, breathing through his nostrils like a sweating horse.

*I Am Curious (Yellow)* was an adult film. I don't mean in the debased contemporary sense of industrially depilated porn starlets with unfeasible implants engaging in joyless mechanical thrashing. I mean in the sense that, aside from the sex scenes, it included an interview with the Swedish minister of trade. If that's not "adult," what is? It was certainly more adult than many of us new members of the film society were in the mood for. There were interviews with Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Martin Luther King Jr., and Miss Nyman questioned Swedes passing in the street about the Vietnam War and demilitarizing the Swedish armed forces. But in between these longueurs, the leading lady was certainly a game gal—and in a remarkable range of locations, including in a pond, up a tree, and outside the royal palace in Stockholm.

If I recall correctly, the connection between the interviews with Olof Palme et al. and the sex-in-a-tree bits was that Lena Nyman's character—a sociologist called "Lena"—believes in both political freedom and personal freedom, and the film explores the ironies and contradictions between her commitment to pacifism in the political sphere with her commitment to aggression in the sexual sphere. Or something like that. Norman Mailer hailed it as "one of the most important pictures I have ever seen in my life." Aside from the nudity, Sjöman also flashed key words from his political philosophy up on-screen: "NONCOOPERATION," "FRATERNIZATION," "SABOTAGE."

The film pioneered a new cinematic concept: sex in a political context. Hitherto, there had been no context whatsoever in most movie sex. In the fifties, it was heartily earnest paeans to naturism. In the sixties, Russ Meyer and others inaugurated porn with plot. I once had to host a BBC featurette on soft-core Euro-porn, and after the first couple of films I was an expert on the conventions of the genre: the bisexual countess discovers the new stablegirl sleeping naked in the hayloft, and there then follows a sort of Scandinavian pre-echo of the current *What Not to Wear* reality shows, as the countess arranges a fitting session for the stablegirl's new wardrobe, to the accompaniment of elevator music and occasional interjections—"That pipp-hole bra would rilly suit you, ja?"

Vilgot Sjöman, by contrast, kept his eye on the sociopolitical ball. "Do we have a class system in Sweden?" Lena



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Nyman asks her fellow Swedes. "It depends on the people," she's told. "Undress them, and they're all the same. Dress them, and you have a class system." Undress them while talking about the class system, and you have a boffo smash. Sjöman conclusively demonstrated that the biggest bang for the buck was in sex with context. In the years afterward, actresses lined up on talk shows to explain that they wouldn't have done this or that explicit nude scene if it hadn't been "totally in context." With the right subtext and political theme, you could hardly restrain your leading lady from climbing out of her clothes and getting into context.

Not all critics were impressed. Rex Reed dismissed Sjöman as "a very sick Swede with an overwhelming ego and a fondness for photographing pubic hair." But pubic hair was thin on the ground in the late sixties, and if it took a sick Swede with an overwhelming ego to make this artistic breakthrough, so be it. I once asked Victor Lowndes, Hugh Hefner's head honcho at the Playboy Club in London, about this important matter—his girlfriend had been the first centerfold to be shown with pubic hair—and he replied, "Well, we've all got it, haven't we?" Judging from today's *Playboy*, apparently not, but back then the combination of pubic hair and discussions of Swedish politics proved to be box-office dynamite. It would have been a stretch to assert that you were only there—as with your *Playboy* subscription—for the interviews. But, as Vincent Canby of *The New York Times* observed at the belated premiere of *I Am Curious (Yellow)*, "The crowds were large, mostly middle-aged and ruly."

With his intense Nordic mien and thick-rimmed spectacles, Sjöman was an unlikely cementer of the gloomy Swedes' sudden reputation as the sixties' swingingest swingers. The son of a construction worker, he left school at fifteen to work for a cereal company and then as a prison orderly before, already into his thirties, coming to America to do film studies at UCLA. He had written unproduced plays, some of which he adapted into novel and film form. And even when he got hep to the sex racket, he was hampered by an undue attachment to the "well-made play." If you overlooked the bestiality and incest and whatnot, much of his pre-*Curious* work was as conventionally structured as standard West End or Broadway drawing-room fare.

His last film before the bonanza was *My Sister, My Love* (1966), based on *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, set in eighteenth-century Syskonbadd and starring Bibi Andersson as the eponymous eighteenth-century sis gone bad and Per Oscarsson as the twin brother with whom she's enjoying a vigorous incestuous relationship. The critics yawned: unconventional sex in a conventional narrative structure—you'll have to do better than that. Some years ago, I visited the British director Derek Jarman on the set of his *War Requiem*. Racked by AIDS and wheezing and coughing somewhat distractedly, he quite out of the blue named *My Sister, My Love* and its startling ending—a new life retrieved from death—as one of the films that had made the most profound impact on him. And I'd wager that, unlike Norman Mailer, he meant it, for why otherwise mention it? By then, Vilgot Sjöman was an all-but-forgotten one-hit provocateur.

He followed *I Am Curious (Yellow)* with *I Am Curious (Blue)*, whose material was in effect leftovers from the first film. Yellow and blue are the colors of the Swedish flag, and the idea of the two films was that in combination, you got a complete picture of the state. *Blue*, or *Jag Ar Nyfiken—Blå*, concerned itself, according to Sjöman, with the Church, prison camps, government, and so forth—which, practically speaking, boiled down to *Yellow* with a lot less sex. To fans of the first film, *Blå* was a big blah. Some critics argued that *Yellow* was a man's film and *Blue* was a woman's film, but if you did as Sjöman suggested and laid the movies end to end, you noticed more people were getting laid end to end in the first film. *I Am Curious (Yellow)* was the blue film, *I Am Curious (Blue)* was the red film—socialist politics leavened fitfully by Sjöman's camera lovingly lingering on the sweetly chubby Lena, his muse.

And that was it. Having been raped by a German shepherd in Sjöman's *491* and had her oral-sex technique analyzed by the U.S. Supreme Court, Lena Nyman figured she'd exhausted the director's range of possibilities and went off to become one of the most respected serious actresses at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, in Stockholm. Sjöman, on the other hand, went off to make *Till Sex Do Us Part*, a farce with a hit title it couldn't live up to. He kept busy: lots of books, not so many films, and with diminishing returns. In the wake of *I Am Curious* came more films for the curious: *The Devil in Miss Jones* and *Last Tango in Paris*, with suburban audiences lining up to see Brando bark, "Get the butter!" And then came video and the Internet, and the mainstream sex film faded away as quickly as it had appeared. New stars mostly declined to take their clothes off, and even with his on, Brando looked as if he'd have been better advised to yell, "Get the I Can't Believe It's Not Butter!"

It seems hard now to recall what the fuss was all about, and indeed, from the bemused tone of some obituaries, Vilgot Sjöman might as well have been a director of silent movies or singing-cowboy pictures or some other obsolete genre. Cinematic sex, like so much real sex, was over almost as soon as it had begun. By the nineties there was no surer way to laughing-stock status in Hollywood than some ill-considered "erotica." Joe Eszterhas's reputation never recovered from *Showgirls*, and poor Sharon Stone was reduced to blaming the failure of *Basic Instinct 2* on cowardly moviegoers unwilling to go against the new puritanism of the Bush tyranny. Apparently we're no longer curious, but we are yellow.

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# WORD FUGITIVES

*by* BARBARA WALLRAFF

In March we asked for "a word to describe a kind of typographical error: hitting a function key by mistake while typing on a computer," thereby causing the computer to "start taking insane actions." The standard arrangement of computer or typewriter keys is, of course, called QWERTY, after the sequence of letters at the upper left of the keyboard. Hence Thomas Fowler, of Lake Jackson, Texas, wrote, "When you accidentally hit a function key while typing on a computer, it almost always makes the computer behave *disqwertyously*." Susan Chilton, of Kitchener, Ontario, suggested the term *qwer-key keyboarding*; and Amanda Petrucelli, of Plymouth, Ind., *qwertastrophe*. Computers assign numerical values to letters following the American Standard Code for Information Interchange, or ASCII. Hence John Ciccarelli, of Palo Alto, Calif., wrote, "Ah, you mean when everything you type from then on looks somehow *asciiew*, causing a feeling of *disqwertytude*? I believe the term is *numb lock*."

Jerry Schoen, of New Salem, Mass., surmised that the reader who originally asked for the word "inadvertently invoked a *flub-routine*." Quintin J. Maltby, of Toronto, Ontario, thought that "he must have accidentally hit the *Defeat* key." John Scott, of Kensington, Md., suggested, "How about saying 'Whoops, I hit a *misfunction* key.'" And Chris Rooney, of Berkeley, Calif., wrote, "Since I am known to swear when I mistakenly hit a function key, I suppose that typographical error would best be described as a *pre-curser*."

Mark Brice, of Austin, Texas, shared some actual computer-speak: *fat fingering* the keyboard. He wrote, "That's certainly not a coinage—I've spent 23 years working with and on computers and I've heard this one often." The *Computer Desktop Encyclopedia* confirms Brice's information, explaining that *fat finger* "refers to accidentally pressing the wrong key on a keyboard and entering an erroneous command that causes a serious problem." The Web site Word Spy points out that one can also *fat finger* a telephone keypad, resulting in *fat finger dialing*—which is either "a telephone scam in which a company sets up a toll number that is one digit different than a popular number, so that the company earns money when customers accidentally mis-dial the legitimate number" or "mis-dialing a phone number in this manner."

But we digress. Kathleen DeBold, of Burtonsville, Md., takes top honors. She wrote, "Hitting the function key on a computer by mistake can cause mass destruction of the document you're working on. That's why it is classified as *cyber errorism*."

The other March request was for "a word that means nostalgia for a time when I wasn't alive." This put more than a few readers in mind of the poem "Miniver Cheevy," by Edwin Arlington Robinson. (Sample verse: "Miniver loved the days of old / When swords were bright and steeds were prancing; / The vision of a warrior bold / Would set him dancing.") Thus were coined the likes of *mischeevyousness* (by Arthur Saltzman, of Joplin, Mo.) and *cheevery*, *cheevish*, and *cheevement* (all by Bruce L. Bush, of Highland Park, N.J.).

Joan Biddle, of New York City, wrote, "I often feel this; I think it's very real! The word I would use is *reincarniscence*, a fusion of *reincarnation* and *reminiscence*." Richard Ulyate, of Torrance, Calif., called what we're looking for "an interest in the *prenaissance*, which, for example, might be the Beatles for some and Teddy Roosevelt for others." More than one person proposed *notstalgia* and *wistful thinking*. Lauren Lilly, of Boise, Idaho, proposed *histfulness*; Tom Linde, of Seattle, Wash., proposed *antedelusian*; Dave Warshaw, of Annapolis, Md., *halcyonation*; Charles Browne, of Peacham, Vt., *preposterity*; and Aaron Riccio, of New York City, *precedentimental*.

These are swell, but they don't quite get the point across. Diane P. Genereux, of Seattle, Wash., takes top honors for her lucid coinage *chronderlust*.

**Now LARRY HERBST, of Pasadena, Calif., writes, "As a relatively new parent, I find myself groping for a word that describes the mass of items required for the simplest outing with a newborn: extra diapers, wipes, toys, playpen, baby carrier, etc. Whereas we used to be able to just hop in the car and go, we now have to gather an amazing amount of clutter."**

**And KATHY LAW, of Casablanca, Morocco, writes, "There ought to be a word for the tendency my father-in-law has to buy much more produce at the farmers' market than he could ever eat."**

*Send words that meet Larry Herbst's or Kathy Law's needs to Word Fugitives,* The Atlantic Monthly *P.O. Box 67375, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by August 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you'd like* The Atlantic *to help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.*

*Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by* Atlantic *authors. The next installment's correspondents will be sent* To Hell With All That, *by Caitlin Flanagan;* Guests of the Ayatollah *by Mark Bowden; and my own* Word Fugitives.



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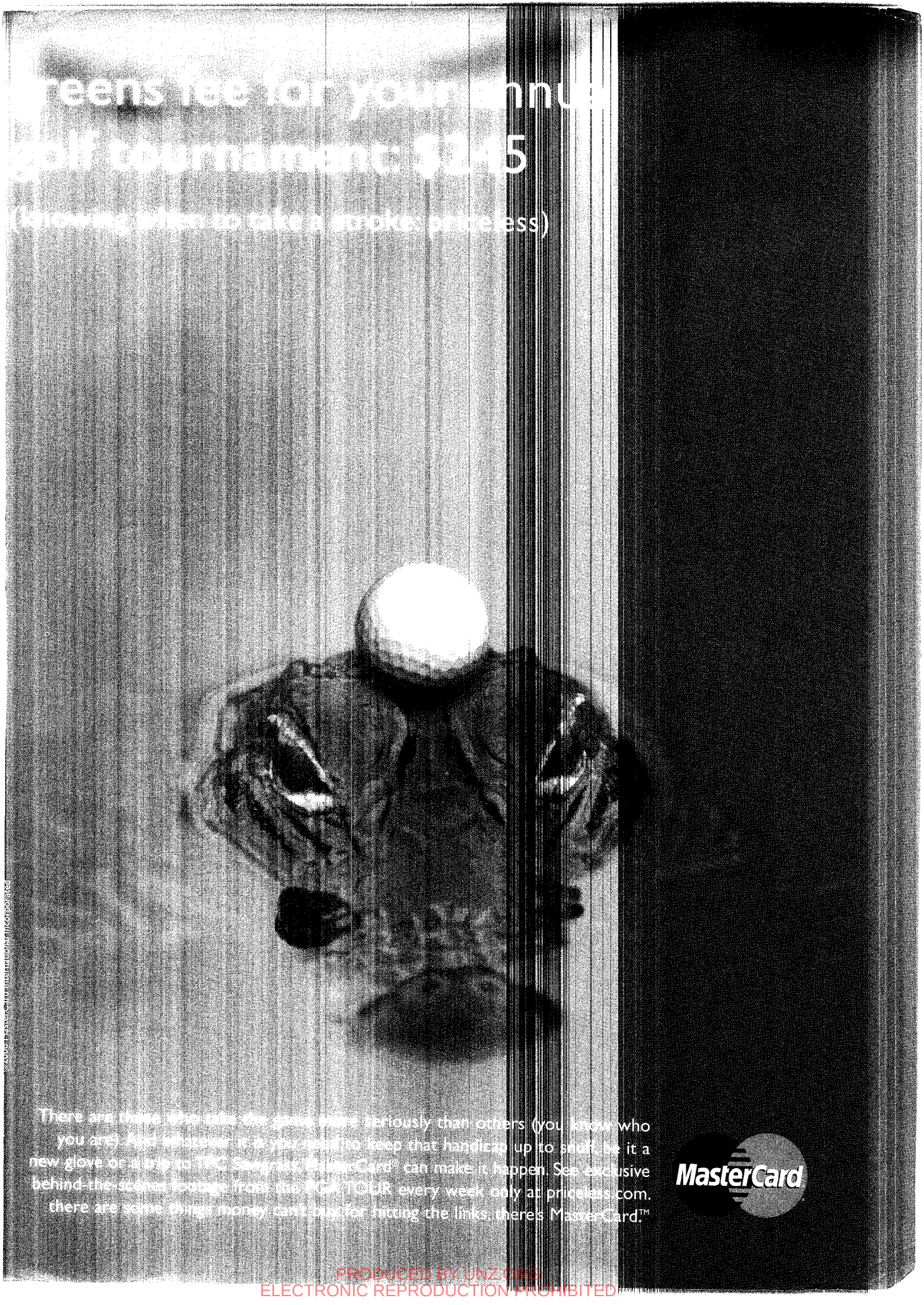


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# American[illegible] over o[illegible]n dolla[illegible]
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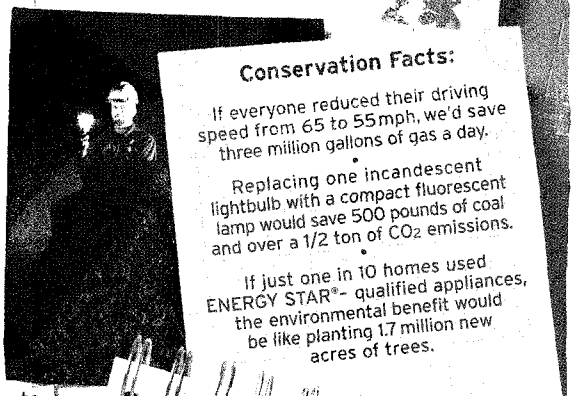
## So wh[illegible] the power to chan[illegible]at?

Because of surging economies in the developing world and continued growth among the industrialized nations, global energy use is climbing. As a result, supplies are tight. Prices are rising. And energy users are calling for viable alternatives.

The good news is we've got a huge source of alternative energy all around us. It's called conservation, and it's the lowest cost new source of energy we have at hand. A reduction of just 5% of global energy use would save us the equivalent of over 10 million barrels of oil a day. Clearly, saving energy is like finding it. So how do we do it?

Incorporating energy efficient technology into new construction could reduce consumption by 40%. Governments and businesses must reduce their own energy use and promote conservation to their citizens and employees. Further improvements in fuel efficiency will play a crucial role, too. And the average person wields incredible power when it comes to conserving energy, from driving slower to switching to more efficient home appliances.

Of course, not only does using less energy mean there's more fuel to go around, it also means fewer greenhouse gas emissions. The fact is, if everyone began conserving today, we'd see results immediately. We've taken some of the steps needed to get started but we need your help to get the rest of the way.



### Conservation Facts:

If everyone reduced their driving speed from 65 to 55mph, we'd save three million gallons of gas a day.

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Replacing one incandescent lightbulb with a compact fluorescent lamp would save 500 pounds of coal and over a 1/2 ton of $CO_2$ emissions.

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If just one in 10 homes used ENERGY STAR®- qualified appliances, the environmental benefit would be like planting 1.7 million new acres of trees.

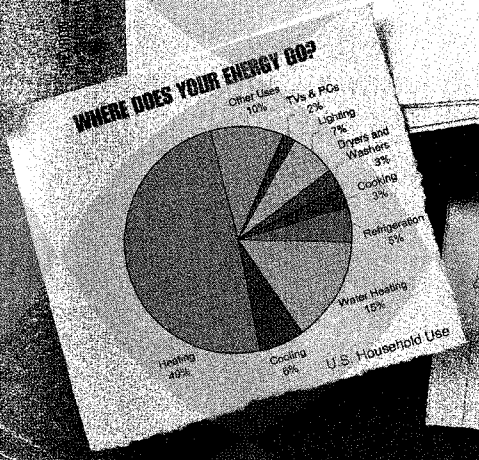
### ⚠ Chevron Steps Taken:

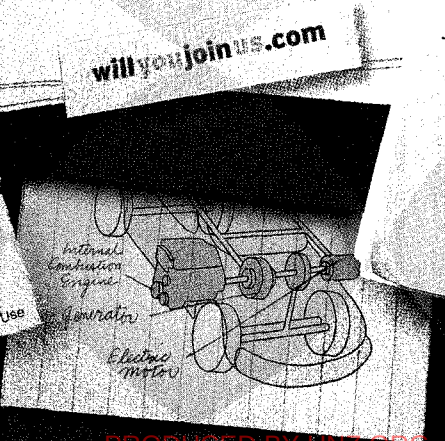
**Saving our own energy:**
- Since 1992, Chevron has improved energy efficiency by 24%
- We use cogeneration technology at our refineries to produce additional electricity from otherwise wasted energy

**Saving other people's energy:**
Chevron Energy Solutions is a separate, proven business dedicated to energy efficiency. Success stories include:
- Improvements that will lower the Northern CA postal service's electricity spending by 46%
- Helping the U.S. government save taxpayers $151 million while reducing greenhouse gas emissions by an expected 1.5 million tons

Chevron

Human energy

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